

MEL'S

where home and garden come together

PERENNIALS

SPRING GARDEN CARE

CLEANUP

For those who did not do fall maintenance, now is the time to prune back all dead matter to make way for new spring growth. This can possibly be done in late February or early March. You should use care not to injure any new growth that has already emerged at the base of the plants. Special attention should be paid to ornamental grasses so as not to cut into any new shoots just appearing above ground level. Groundcovers should also be cleaned of foreign debris at this time.

PRUNING BACK

All plants that send up new flowering stems each year should be pruned back to the basal foliage. Yarrow, Monarda, Shasta Daisy, Salvia and others fit this description. Plants that have a more woody structure should be trimmed lightly only to shape in the fall, then pruned more aggressively in the spring. Examples of these would be Artemisia, Lavatera and Lavender.

DIVIDING EXISTING PLANTS

Plants that were divided in the fall have a jump start on those divided in the spring due to the additional root growth that can be possible over the winter season. It is preferable to divide in the fall, only if they need it, with the exception of the ornamental grasses and hosta, which are best divided in the spring. A plant needs dividing when the center of the plant becomes open and weak or the entire vigor of the plant diminishes and the flowering is reduced. All plants that were not divided in the fall and are in need of being divided should be done in the spring.

HOW TO DIVIDE PERENNIALS

Dig up the entire plant with as much of the root ball left intact as possible. Separate the roots into 1/4, 1/3 or 1/2 depending on the vigor of the plant. For example, Siberian Iris are best left in fairly sizeable clumps to insure they bloom the following year whereas Monarda could be divided into smaller pieces due to its rapid growth.

FERTILIZATION

Plants that are established are best fertilized in the spring. A good initial fertilizer for all perennials, annuals, trees and shrubs is Webfoot Jump Start. It provides a good range of elements for initial transplanting as well as promotes long term growth. You can also add 3-4" of compost or aged manure or use any of the quality fertilizers we carry. Ask one of Mel's professionals what would be best for your individual needs.