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Perennials - Plants to Prune in the Spring

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Artemisia - Most Artemisia don't like to be pruned in the fall. The growth that results is too tender to survive the winter and the dieback is often enough to kill the whole plant. Clean in early spring.

Asters - Fall blooming Asters have generally been pinched and forced several times throughout the growing season. Once they are finally allowed to bloom, they appreciate being left alone to recuperate, until Spring. Several bloom so late into the fall, the question of fall clean-up becomes moot.

Astilbe - Astilbe don't require much maintenance. Fall clean-up is unnecessary and may weaken the plant's tolerance for cold. Minimal spring clean-up is required.

Balloon Flower - If pruned for sturdiness, Balloon flower blooms late in the season and remains attractive until frost. Since it is late emerging in the spring, it helps to leave the old foliage as a marker.

Black-Eyed Susan - Although not particularly attractive in winter, the seed heads will feed the birds.

Butterfly Bush - To lessen winter kill, wait for signs of green at the base and then cut back to 6-10 inches.

Campanula - Most Campanulas get sheared back at some point during the summer, to clean up ugly or damaged foliage and encourage another flush of blooming. Fresh basal foliage will result and should be left throughout winter, so as not to encourage more tender growth in the fall.

Coral Bells - Heuchera are prone to heaving in soils that freeze and thaw. Leaving the foliage in tact helps to mulch the plants through winter.

Delphinium - If you're lucky enough to grow Delphiniums as perennials, remove the flower stalks, but allow the foliage to remain until Spring.

Dianthus - Most Dianthus can remain somewhat evergreen throughout the winter, and nothing is gained by cutting back in the fall. They will still need some clean-up in the spring.

Geum - Geum can remain semi-evergreen throughout the winter, so no fall pruning is necessary, especially if you've been deadheading and cleaning up dead leaves during the growing season.

Goldenrod - The new hybrid goldenrods don't seed or spread all over the garden and can be left standing for winter interest. Study clumpers, like 'Fireworks' and 'Golden Fleece' will remain upright through Spring. The old-fashioned species Solidago should be cut in fall, to avoid invasiveness.

Hosta - Although Hosta foliage gets ugly over winter, some Hosta varieties can be damaged by spring frosts and benefit from the protection of the collapsed foliage.

Joe-Pye Wood - When a plant is bred from a common weed, you can usually assume that it doesn't need much care to survive. Joe-Pye will bloom well into the fall and then produce fluffy seed heads. You can cut it back if you choose, but it's not necessary to the plant's survival.

Lavender - Many areas have a hard time over-wintering lavender. The problem is more often moisture than cold, but cold is a factor. Don't prune lavender late in the season, as new growth is extremely cold sensitive. Wait until new growth appears in the spring before removing winter die back.

Lupine - Lupines are temperamental, short-lived perennials and they do not enjoy winter. Leave the foliage on for protection and hope for the best come spring.

Mums - Leave the foliage in tact to protect the plant's crown. All the better to let the flowers bloom well into the fall.

Purple Coneflowers - Coneflowers don't look terribly attractive in winter, but they do attract and feed birds. If you'd like both birds and aesthetics, you can always prune your coneflowers in July and get squat, sturdy plants that will provide seed and remain standing.

Russian Sage - Like its cousin, Lavender, Perovskia doesn't like to be trimmed back in the fall, because its tender growth is too sensitive to cold. Wait until new growth appears in the spring and then cut back to about 6-8". If the only new growth is from the base of the plant, the entire top woody section has died back and it can be pruned to the ground.

Sedum - Many of the tall Sedum can remain attractive throughout the winter, even holding caps of snow on their flower heads. 'Autumn Joy', in particular, holds up very well. The basal foliage appears very early in the spring, so Sedum can be one of the first plants you prune in the spring.

Tickseed- Like Chelone, most Coreopsis seem to fare better if allowed to stand during the winter and be cleaned-up in the Spring.