

Fall Wrap Up



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It seems that the older I get the faster time flies by but as I got to thinking that through I have to acknowledge that time is moving the same as it always has, it is my perception of time that is changed. This getting old is not for sissies. This past weekend I had to opportunity to spend a few days working in my own yard. It was great to get my hands back in my own soil but, yikes, it is overwhelming with weeds and plants that need attention. But the getting old comes into play as I can't seem to get as much done as I think I should. That is more than enough feeling sorry for myself. I did get to see a glorious show of yellow larch on the slopes of the Bitterroot and Sapphire mountains.

This will be the last Pat's Corner for this year so hopefully I can remember all the things to touch on. First, FALL IS A GREAT TIME TO PLANT. Yes I just shouted that! As plants are getting ready to sleep they can spend more time getting

their roots established so they can be ready to wake up with our spring and manage through our first hot summer. No more discussion needed right?

Fall is also the best time to plant or divide peony plants. Peonies need a well prepared hole with extra compost or well-rotted manure. If you are dividing them be sure you have several of the pink buds on each root division. Be sure to plant those pink buds no more than 2" deep. Tamp the soil around the roots as you cover so that they don't settle too deep later. Planting too deep is one of the main reasons peonies don't bloom.

If you are interested in shrubs and trees that will provide food for your or the birds we have a great selection for your yard. We have serviceberry, chokeberry, gooseberry, honeyberry, strawberry, cherry shrubs and trees, apple, plum, peach, apricot, grapes, and more. Planting fruit bushes now will get you fruit next year.

If you have maple trees and have seen the yellowing of leaves that often happens in our alkaline soil, fall is a good



time to apply Dr Iron. Even though the tree is 'sleeping' there is still microbial activity in the soil that makes the iron available to the tree. In this case the strategy of treating before you see the problem will be less stress on your tree.

While we are talking about trees let's cover the fall checklist. All of the trees (and shrubs) in your yard will benefit from a good watering before the ground freezes. That could be next week or next month or Christmas here in Billings. I know your irrigation system has been turned off. If you can only do a few plants choose the trees and anything newly planted this year. Even carrying a few buckets of water out on a warm winter day can make the live or die difference if we have a dry winter where we don't have snow on the ground. Try to get the ground watered 2' deep out to the drip line of the tree. If you have young trees with dark gray or brown bark like maples, ash, lindens, or flowering crabs it is a good idea to protect the trunk from winter sunscald. Apply a light colored plastic or cloth tree wrap to the trunk now and remove in the spring when the leaves come on. The idea is to reflect the sun away from the dark tree trunk. Protect your trees from the weed eater!! Cutting the bark with the weed eater is a frequently seen problem that can kill your tree. Most newly planted trees don't like to compete with the grass for water so cut the grass back off the root ball and mulch so the weed eater never gets near the trunk. If you have not

fenced your trees or shrubs to keep the deer off please consider doing so. Deer will eat anything if there is snow and they can't find food.

Fall is also the time when we see seasonal needle drop on evergreens. The amount of needle drop depends on tree species. For a healthy, well watered pine tree it is normal for the tree to drop its third or fourth year needles from the top to the bottom of the tree. First and second year growth should not drop. MSU Extension has a bulletin with photos to check out: http://www.mturbanalert.org/alertDocs/Seasonal%20Needle%20Drop_2017.pdf

If you have ornamental grass in your landscape you probably know the benefits of leaving the grass stems all winter and cutting them back in early spring. The stems will give you winter interest, catch snow for the root ball and leave seeds for birds to enjoy. Karl Foerster (Calamagrostis) grass is the one that comes up first in the spring, often mid to late April if the weather warms up. Fescue and Blue Oat grass (Helictotrichon, and I still cannot pronounce that) are semi-evergreen and usually only need a light cleaning. Switch grass (Panicum) and Miscanthus and Deschampsia grass usually don't appear until around late May unless you plant them in a warm southern exposure.

Here at the nursery we are still showing specular fall color with the barberries, Gro Low sumac, aronia,



native shrubs and rose bushes putting on the best show. Even if you don't like barberries you have to love the color. Besides the virtues of fall planting keep in mind that fall planning with your landscaper could help get your project started in the spring and checking out the fall color now will help you know what to expect from the plants. We still have a great selection of trees, shrubs and perennials to fill every spot. We also have Dr Iron, deer repellants and tree trunk guards to help you finish out your season. Thank you to everyone who has supported us this season. We are planning now for spring 2018 so if you are looking for something please give us a call to see if we can find it. We will be open Saturday, October 28 as our last Saturday and then Monday - Friday 8am -5pm as long as the weather holds. As a thank you to our customers we are having an end of the season sale with all potted plants at 20% off. Thank you again for your kind words and support of Pat's Corner this season. Pat



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