



autumn

LANDSCAPING

Autumn great time to prepare trees,

Autumn in Wyoming is spectacular!

The intense heat of summer is gone. We are typically blessed with cool nights followed by dry, warm days as the sun begins its journey toward winter solstice.

Autumn colors give much pleasure as plant life slows, but now is not the time to give up on your landscape! There is still much preparation for winter and next year's growing season.

Trees and shrubs. Early fall is the time to fence sapling-size trees and shrubs (diameters of trunks ½ to 5 inches) to protect them from wildlife. Male deer begin rubbing their antlers to remove velvet and to mark territories for breeding season. Bucks can decimate a young tree in just a few short minutes, and newly planted trees are prime candidates. Fencing trees and shrubs requires putting in three to four metal posts equally spaced about three feet apart around the tree. Wrap poly snow fence, burlap, landscape fabric or any other lightweight but strong barrier around the posts to form an enclosure. Leave the enclosure up until April.

Autumn and winter watering is critical for trees and shrubs planted within the last three years. Water twice a month throughout autumn and once a month in winter if they are exposed and have no snow cover.

Winter watering is especially important for evergreens as they continue to lose water through needles throughout the winter. Provide a good soaking of water to the root zone of trees and shrubs. Although trees and shrubs grow roots throughout the year, in autumn they are actively building root mass, and providing adequate water in the root zone ensures healthy root development.

Lawns. Like trees, grass in autumn actively builds root mass in preparation for winter. Watering lawns twice a month throughout autumn provides the right environment. Fall applications of fertilizer are very important to lawns – not that the fertilizer makes the grass grow more aboveground – research has found fertilizer stimulates the roots to grow even more making for a stronger plant next spring.

Autumn fertilizer applications are not recommended for trees. If both lawn and trees are together, landowners can apply half the fertilizer's recommended rate. Contact a local nursery or University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service office for fertilizer application rates. A list of CES offices is online at www.uwyo.edu/UWCES/Counties.asp.

A new UW CES bulletin recommends ways to fertilize trees and shrubs. It is available online at www.uwyo.edu/CES/PUBS/B1172.pdf. Copies for \$5 may be obtained by e-mailing the College of Agriculture's Resource Center at bixbyd@uwyo.edu, calling the center at (307) 766-2115, or writing to the University of Wyoming, College of Agriculture, Department 3313, 1000 E. University Ave., Laramie, WY 82071.

Lastly, as the final mowing comes, adjust the cutting height to about 3 inches or higher. There is a direct correlation between the grass leaf blade and



Planting bulbs now means early spring color. Consider planting 'species' tulips as an alternative to the hybrid tulips normally grown.

CHORES

shrubs, lawns for next year



Ornamental grasses like this mass planting of 'Karl Foerster' feather reed grass provides a magnificent backdrop and serves well as part of the autumn and winter garden. Wait until March to cut back to 3 to 4 inches above ground.

the amount of roots developed – the taller the grass, the bigger and deeper the grass root mass.

Perennials and Ornamental Grasses. The easiest chores lie in the flowerbeds! Many perennials have showy seed heads that allow for winter interest if left intact, and many provide important bird food. Don't be in a hurry to clip everything back to ground level! Save it for spring.

Flowerbeds should be watered just like a lawn – they, too, are developing a robust root mass. Fertilization is generally not recommended. Many wise gardeners in Wyoming use fallen tree leaves as a mulch for their flowerbeds. It insulates the soils to the harshness of winter. Remove whatever is left in April or May and compost. Ornamental grasses should not be cut back. They provide a magnificent backdrop throughout autumn and winter and really serve as 'bones' to the garden. By 'bones' it is meant the grasses will continue to serve as a structural element when all other

plants are left as small rosettes hardly noticeable. Cut back grasses to 3 to 4 inches above ground the first nice days in March depending upon elevation.

Autumn plantings. It seems contrary to plant in autumn as the season comes to a close, but there is a high degree of success in planting trees and lawns this time of year! Consider that many nurseries have spectacular sales as they close out their season, and landowners can benefit. Almost all non-evergreen trees and shrubs can be safely planted in autumn through early winter. The plants are literally going to bed in their new homes, and limited stress is placed on them this time of year.

Remember to water and protect them from undesirable wildlife species! Come next spring they'll awake to their new environment.

Seeding cool-season lawns such as Kentucky bluegrass and various fescue varieties up to September 20 in most parts of Wyoming is very successful. The grass gets established prior to winter and is ready to go next spring – and you will have bypassed the hottest and most water-demanding time of the year.

If considering sod, it's been shown to successfully establish as late as November in much of Wyoming! To be safe, consider October 15 as the cut-off point for sod.

Lastly, autumn is the time to plant spring-flowering bulbs. Consider tulips, jonquils, daffodils, and snowdrops. Each of these flowering bulbs does extraordinarily well in Wyoming.

Of those listed, one of the author's favorites is a 'species' tulip. These are small tulips that hug the ground and offer spectacular springtime color. They also seem to be less of a deer attractant than their hybrid cousins. Often, species tulips can be found at most garden centers that offer bulbs for autumn plantings.

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