

## **Rule of Thumb Plant Care:**

Flowering Shrubs: Most should be trimmed with hand-held pruners after they flower to shape. Fertilize in spring. Some taller shrubs such as Cistena Plums, Burningbush, Viburnums... can be trimmed back at the top to encourage denser growth towards the middle of the plant.

Evergreen Shrubs: Most should be trimmed after the years new growth, usually by mid May- June the plants have pushed out all their new growth. Use either a hand-held pruners or pruning shears to trim the plants. Fertilize in spring.

Broadleaf Evergreen Shrubs: (Azaleas, Rhododendrons, Hollies, Boxwoods) Prefers moist, well drained, acidic soils and shade to partially shaded light conditions. They should be trimmed with a hand-held pruners by cutting back individual stems to shape. They should be fertilized at least 3-4 times a year with an acidic fertilizer such as Miracid. It helps to keep these plants well watered, especially in late fall to assist them through the winters. During harsh, -15 to -20 degree winter weather burlap can be uses to cover the plants to protect them against the winds and temperatures, and a layer of mulch can be used to insulate the root system.

Flowering Trees: Most should be trimmed with a hand-held pruners, pruning saw or a pole-pruners after they flower to shape and keep in their realm. Remove suckers as they appear and fertilize in spring. A weed mat can be used around the base of the tree to help prevent suckers, be sure water can permeate through the mat.

Shade Trees: Heavy pruning should be done in the winter months, you can prune to shape anytime. However Maple trees should be pruned in spring or summer to avoid excessive bleeding (sap). Fertilize in spring.

Evergreen Trees: Most prefer sun. To maintain a dense habit prune one-half the new candle growth throughout the tree. Most can go without pruning or they can be sheared to keep a formal appearance. For the most part Hemlocks can tolerate a fair amount of pruning, Spruce maintain a good shape on there own and pines should have the new growth pruned back each year to keep them in there realm. Fertilize in spring.

Ornamental Grasses: These are very simple to maintain. Grasses are cut back once a year, cut the grass down about 4-6" from the mulch using shears or a weed whip. We recommend cutting back late winter/early spring, around March 1<sup>st</sup>. This will allow the plant to give fall and winter interest even as their color fades. The wheat fall color they have offers nice contrast to other brilliant fall colors, they will continue to give interest throughout the winter. If a heavy snowfall make the grass unsightly you can cut the grass back at that time.

Every 3-5 years the grasses should be dug up and split into 2 to 4 plants, replant one of these plants back in the original location. This will keep the plant from overcrowding the space. Early spring is the best season to split the grasses.

## **Rule of Thumb Plant Care: (Continued)**

### Perennials:

- ◆ Most prefer moist, well drained, highly organic soil with a sandy mixture for good drainage.
- ◆ It's a good practice to mulch with compost, peat moss, and other organic matter. Then add a layer of hardwood mulch to have a uniform cover in the bed.
- ◆ An all-around garden fertilizer such a Miracle Grow can be applied once a month during the growing season. Do not fertilize late in the fall as it may promote early blooms that may be injured by a late frost.
- ◆ Most perennials need dug up and split every 3-5 years to keep from overcrowding.
- ◆ Spent flowers should be pinched off. Cut plant back after blooming time is over if appearance is undesirable.
- ◆ Most perennials are cut back at mulch level at the end of the growing season or when dried out. Add mulch over plants late fall to insulate through the winter.

## **General Rules of Thumb Pruning & Fertilizing:**

### Pruning:

- ◆ Prune most flowering trees and shrubs soon after the flowers are spent. If you prune these in the fall or early spring you will cut off most of the next seasons flower.
- ◆ Prune most evergreens after new growth has pushed out (usually by mid-June), shape anytime.
- ◆ Prune most shade trees (not Maples) in the winter, shape anytime.
- ◆ Always remove dead wood, if the branch has no green in it prune it off. You can scratch the branch in question a bit to see if it has any green (life) under the bark, then prune through the end of the branch and check the center. If it is green it should push out new growth and develop. If it is brown continue to cut back until green appears or to the end of the branch.
- ◆ Remove flowers after they are spent.

### Fertilizing:

- ◆ When fertilizing in the summer months be sure to water in well to avoid burning or drying the plants.
- ◆ Fertilize most plants in the spring after last frost.
- ◆ Broadleaf evergreens should be fertilized several times a year with an acidic fertilizer.
- ◆ Use high Nitrogen content to stimulate new stem and leaf growth.
- ◆ Use high Phosphorus content to stimulate root growth and more flowers.
- ◆ Use high Potassium content to built stem strength and disease resistance.
- ◆ When you fertilize the lawn you also fertilize the trees within the lawn to a certain degree.
- ◆ Best time to fertilize shade trees is spring after the last frost.