

# What to Plant Now for a Fun Winter Garden

## September 2018

Any **vegetables** on the UF list (see printout) suggested for September forward can be started now from seed or baby plants. The group is heavy on the salad 🥗...But there are lots of veggies, too! 🥕🥦

Annuals (plant starts) can be planted now to keep color into cooler weather. Bulbs should be planted now for spring blooms...look online for daffodils for warm climates! I'm trying some warm climate species tulips this year, too! 🌷

In October through December, **trees, perennials, transplants, and divisions** (except grasses and grass-like plants...see below) will benefit from cooler temperatures for stress-free root establishment. Keep watered but not soggy (which is unlikely if your soil is sandy like mine).

When to cut back and divide **ornamental grasses** depends on the type of grass. Here's some rules of thumb excerpted from Proven Winners:

### **First Ornamental Grass Rule of Thumb: Cut back warm season grasses in fall or by mid to late spring**

Once your warm season grasses turn brown in fall/winter you can trim them back at almost any time. You can leave the dried grasses and seed heads in your garden for winter interest, if you like how they look or want to support the birds and other critters over winter. If you leave the trimming until spring try to make sure to cut them back to the ground (you can leave a couple of inches) by late spring, before new growth begins.

Examples of Warm Season Grasses:

- Northern Sea Oats (Chasmanthium)
- Japanese Silver Grass (Miscanthus sp.)
- Hardy Pampas Grass (Erianthus)
- Perennial Fountain Grass (Pennisetum)
- Switch Grass (Panicum)
- Prairie Cord Grass (Spartina)
- Feather Reed Grass (Calamagrostis, e.g. 'Karl Foerster')
- Florida Muhly Grass (Muhlenbergia)
- Japanese Forestgrass (Hakonechloa, e.g. 'Aureola')

### **Second Ornamental Grass Rule of Thumb: Cut back cool season grasses in very early spring**

Cool season grasses tend to look good even as the weather cools. Leave their foliage in place until spring and then cut them back, leaving about 1/3 of the plant in place. Trimming cool season grasses too harshly can irreparably harm the plant.

Examples of cool season grasses:

- Fescues (Festuca)
- Blue Oat Grass (Helictotrichon)
- Tufted Hair Grass (Deschampsia)
- Autumn Moor Grass (Sesleria)

For many grasses it is easier to tie the grass in a bundle before trimming.

If you have a large, established clump of grass, you may need to use a weed eater (use one with a blade rather than string), electric or gas powered hedge trimmers, or even a chain saw. Remember, many grass blades are sharp! Wear gloves!

**Third Ornamental Grass Rule of Thumb: Divide warm season grasses anytime spring through mid-summer**

All ornamental grasses should be divided when they are **actively growing but not while they are flowering**. If the plants are dormant when they are transplanted they won't establish a good root system. Warm season grasses generally start growing in late spring or early summer and have their active growth period during the heat of the summer. Warm season grasses will tend to bloom in mid to late summer.

**Fourth Ornamental Grass Rule of Thumb: Divide cool season grasses in spring or early fall**

Cool season grasses are actively growing in spring and fall.

**Fifth Ornamental Grass Rule of Thumb: Divide evergreen grasses and grass-like plants in spring only**

Evergreen grasses don't ever go dormant and don't require pruning. Carex (sedge), Liriope (LilyTurf), Ophiogon (Mondo Grass), Rushes, and others are not actually grasses, and also require no pruning (comb or cut out brown or dead leaves).

**POEM FOR PERENNIALS**

The first year they sleep,  
The second year they creep,  
The third year they leap!