



Newsletter Landscaping and Trails Committee

High Desert Gardening

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Pruning Ornamental Grasses

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Service

All too often, gardeners and landscapers prune back the clumps too short and too early. Unlike broadleaf plants that produce new (meristematic) growth on the tips, the origin of new tissue in grasses is at the base of the plant, so if they're cut down too low to the ground, that meristematic region can be irreversibly damaged. And the timing of pruning is key because that above-ground mass of brown grass provides protection for the base through the winter. It's best to clip back the dead grass leaves in early spring so new green growth gets plenty of sunlight. If you have to prune grasses back earlier in the year, for instance, because they're overflowing onto a garden path, consider cutting back minimally, or dig up the whole plant and move it to a space where it can spread all it wants.

Helpful tip: Use string or bungee cord to belt the dead grass bundle before cutting to keep the mess down and make it easier to move the whole mass to the compost pile. Clippings make great mulch around other plants in the garden too. If you waited long enough to do

this work, the seeds will have mostly fallen already, and you don't have to worry about grass seeds sprouting in places you've mulched.



Ornamental grass before pruning.

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Ornamental grass after pruning.

UNM professor, garden author and landscape designer, Judith Phillips, pointed out that native and adapted grasses are wonderful for our xeric landscapes because they are well suited for low precipitation, high summer temperatures, and tons of sun. Our desert soils tend to be low in organic matter and high in mineral salts, including calcium carbonate (aka caliche, not the custard kind), but many grass species thrive in these exact conditions. Their fibrous root structure acts as an excellent soil binder, which helps control erosion and improves soil health. As roots grow and die, they help with soil compaction and add precious organic matter.

For excellent advice on pruning grasses, check out the complete article at <https://aces.nmsu.edu/ces/yard/archives/090118.html>

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Resources:

Free classes by experts on gardening in the High Desert.

Upcoming Gardinar Topics from Jericho Nursery

Sign up at at <https://www.jerichonursery.com>

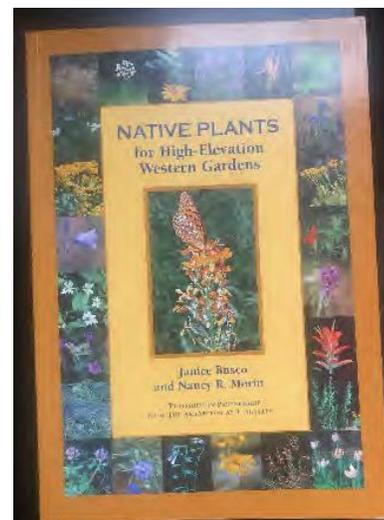
- February 20th: **LAWN CARE**
- February 27th: **PRUNING** with Amos Arber, ABQ Water Authority
Dennis Baca sitting in on Q&A
- March 6th: **ROSE PRUNING** with Marisa Thompson, NMSU

A description of the topics and sign up can be found online at <https://www.jerichonursery.com>. Jericho's website also has monthly calendars of recommended gardening tasks.

Bernalillo Open Space presents Raised Bed Gardening and Composting

Saturday, March 27, 2021, 9-11a.m.
(Register by March 26) Master composter, John Zarola, will discuss raised garden beds in the high desert. Register at <https://www.bernco.gov/events.aspx?calEventId=a0b65431b245412ca8f7854d3b686f70&calCatId=1c7e3d2a2f874ccc aeccc4aaa47917c6&>

Recommended Books:



Native Plants for High Elevation Western Gardens by Janice Busco and Nancy R Morin



Growing the Southwest Garden by Judith Phillips