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## **Winter Gardening**

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Remember when you were wondering what the right time was to give your grasses and perennials a trim? Wonder no more: now is the time. Once the danger of frost is over, and before the new shoots appear, grab the hedge trimmers (the only time I use them) and a ball of twine or bungee cord and tackle the ornamental grasses first. Gather and bundle the grass at its base with the twine or cord and then use the trimmers to give the clump a buzz cut, within 1" of the ground. The twine/cord keeps the grass together for easy clean up. As a bonus, if the clump is looking large, now is the time to split it and create additional plants for your garden – or gifts for your friends.

For your perennials, you want to trim them about 2/3 of the way back. Don't take them all the way to the ground like the grasses. I've experimented with the hedge trimmers on perennials as well, with good results. It's not the more "natural" look that hand pruning gives you, but it is a time saver. When the plant starts growing back, you soon can't tell that it was "hedged" rather than clipped.

I haven't tried the hedge trimmer technique on my roses yet, but in lieu of "missing the window" on pruning for a second year, I just may. Because, yes, now is the time to trim back your roses, too. Remember with all of your winter pruning to wait until after the last frost (as best as anyone can guess). Then sit back and get ready for Spring.