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Fertilizing NOT recommended – Grasses adapt to a very wide range of soils, & over-fertilizing may cause flop or reduced flowering. If you see worms in the hole, the soil is rich enough - though adding some simple organics may promote faster growth. *Nothing* beats last fall's leaves, but good organic composts are also available at garden centers. Chemical fertilizers/manure are often too much. Grasses *never* need to be fed after planting, if mulched.

Watering – Grasses are very drought-tolerant once established, but they absolutely need water every second or third day until established, and then at least weekly into fall their first year. *Rule of thumb: remember the size of the root ball you planted, and water long enough to fill a container of equal volume.* Water should be delivered dead center in the plant. Sprinkler systems or soaker hoses simply aren't enough the first year for any but the smallest grasses, unless they're on for *hours*. *Late-season planting calls for even more water to support all the root re-growth you can get before winter.* Once a sun-loving grass has wintered over in the ground, it will not likely need *any* supplemental water to survive, though some water in dry seasons will often help cosmetically. In extremely dry years, watering deeply every other week or so may be necessary to avoid stunted growth in some species. Dark gold or burgundy tones in the foliage are normal after transplanting – indicating normal shock. If foliage becomes a parched brown and curly, or if plants are markedly shorter than usual, it's a clear sign to water longer and/or more often.

Spring Cutback - Most grasses should be cut down in spring to 3-8" +/- (not critical) before new growth gets up very far, so the old growth doesn't detract from the new. Most people wait until spring so they can enjoy the winter look of the grasses, but cutback can be done in the fall without harm. The most efficient hand tool is a serrated "rescue" knife (We recommend Cold Steel's "Land & Sea Rescue Knife"), but a hand pruner or fine-tooth saw will work. Be sure to wear gloves, as the cut stems puncture skin easily. If you have more than a few to do, a powered hedge trimmer or heavy-duty string trimmer is very advisable.

Sun vs. Shade – "It's not the light – it's the heat." The most popular grasses (including Miscanthus, Switch and Fountain) are "heat-growers." Their metabolism runs best from 80 to 95 degrees, producing faster growth & earlier blooming. Just like roasting a turkey, it takes a certain number of hours/weeks at the right temperature to grow a grass to size and make it bloom. And just like turning down the oven, shade slows things up. However, many grasses perform very well in New England with 4+ hours of sun per day, though they may be a bit shorter and perhaps bloom later than those in full sun. Stems may also be somewhat less rigidly upright in partial shade, as can happen even in full sun in unusually cool summers. (The latest fall bloomers, like Gracillimus and Morning Light, may not even open fully - or at all - in shadier areas in cooler years.)

When to plant or divide – Grasses can be planted and/or divided from early spring into early autumn, with some extra precautions as fall approaches. Like all plants, if there's significant root loss from transplanting or dividing, grasses need serious water and enough warm days to sufficiently re-establish themselves to survive their first winter in a new spot. After about September 1st, divisions (which unavoidably have severe root damage) become a little more risky, but for most species, whole plants at least 12" in diameter with reasonably intact root balls can be confidently transplanted even into November, *if very well watered until hard frost.*

Dividing tips – Many books say you can divide grasses with a spade, but grasses are tough enough that we recommend placing a hatchet or axe head where you want to divide and driving the head through with a heavy hammer or one-hand maul. (Safer and more accurate than just swinging away.) Even better is a Sawzall with a 12" demolition or pruning blade. Dividing is easiest in spring before the foliage gets too tall, but it can be done into late summer, with regular, deep watering of the new divisions until heavy frost.

It's easier to divide larger plants before digging them out. The ground holds them still for you, and it's easier to get the smaller divisions out than one big clump. And if you're leaving part of the original plant in place, dividing in the ground allows you to leave one side of the root ball completely undisturbed, which will greatly speed recovery.

Like other perennials, older grasses eventually lose vigor and often die out in the center. Most books suggest dividing the grass to remove a dying center, and replant one of the divisions, but you can get the same results with much less effort, especially for a large grass, by chopping or even "coring" the plant in place. Use an axe or chisel-tip bar to chop out the dead center (all the way down); remove it; fill the cavity with soil, and water as you would a new division, right into fall. Even better, use a Sawzall with a 12" demolition blade to do the coring.

Besides taking about 1/5 the effort, this also preserves the original diameter of the plant and it will reestablish much more quickly, since the outer perimeter roots are totally uncut.

You can usually avoid this center die-out with grasses by making deep "stimulating cuts" in the center of the plants every spring. They're GRASS, and just like your lawn, cutting strengthens and stimulates them to grow faster.

Embedded Weeds & Trimming – Feel free to trim away broken stems or unsightly foliage on an established grass at any time. Even the most radical cutback won't kill an established grass. (It'll *stimulate* it. Just like your lawn: the more you cut it, the faster it grows.) Likewise, if a weed is so embedded in the crown of your grass that you can't pull it without it breaking, have no qualms about driving a knife or axe blade deeply into the crown, and spread it open to give you access to the weed's roots.

You can also use a specifically broad-leaf weed killer DIRECTLY on your grasses. Ortho's Weed-B-Gon *without* the crabgrass killer is GREAT. You can spray it directly on your plants **IN THE RECOMMENDED CONCENTRATION** and knock out all those broadleaf weeds with no effect on your grasses.

(Remember that weeds are only a *cosmetic* problem. You don't *HAVE* to eliminate them for plant health/survival.)

Spacing – Most grasses eventually reach 24-42" +/- at the base (often 18" the first year), with foliage spans of at least 3-4 ft. Remembering that they can be moved and/or divided as they get larger, mature grasses will eventually want to be 3-5+ feet apart, center-to-center, to minimize intertwining of foliage between neighboring plants.

Mulch – Any bark or similar mulch is good to suppress weeds, as well as hold moisture and soil in place, and will provide a slow but steady supply of nutrients as it breaks down.