

## Perennial Garden Clean-up

By Ward Upham, Kansas State University



Fall is a time for cleaning up gardens. Normally, we recommend "clear cutting" dead stems during the fall to help control insect and disease problems. With herbaceous perennials that have been pest free, you might consider leaving some to provide structure, form and color to the winter garden. For example, ornamental grasses may be attractive even during the winter months. Those near structures should be cut to the ground because they can pose a fire hazard. Perennials with evergreen or semi-evergreen foliage may provide color. Of course, some perennials are naturally messy after dormancy and should be cut back in the fall.

There are other reasons for leaving foliage. Foliage left on marginally hardy plants such as mums and tender ferns helps ensure overwintering of plant crowns. Seedheads of some perennial plants supply food for birds.

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