FALL PEONY CARE – for beautiful Peonies for years to come

When you clean up your garden for winter, follow these care tips for each of the three different types of Peonies.

**Herbaceous Peonies** These are what most people simply refer to as Peonies. They are herbaceous, meaning that the stems and foliage will die back to the ground in the fall. The spring buds are below the soil surface. By early September these buds have already formed, so Peonies can be cut back then, or later into the fall, but they should be cleaned up before winter so the new spring stems will have a clean start. Using sharp clippers cut the stems close to the ground; we leave about 3/4” of the stems to make it easier to find the Peonies. Rake the area to clean it of leaves and debris.

**Tree Peonies** These are shrubs and have woody branches that stay on the plant through all the seasons. As fall progresses the leaves will sometimes turn shades of red, then gradually dry, loosen and fall. When this happens, gently pull out the ones that are caught in the branches, being careful not to damage the spring buds, then rake the area clean. Do not cut the branches back. However, if you notice any broken, shriveled, or crowded branches, they can be pruned during the fall cleanup.

**Intersectional Peonies, also known as Itoh Peonies** These are a cross between the herbaceous Peonies and the woody Tree Peonies. The top of these plants can be cut back, but the bottom portion of their stems are woody and will have buds on them, so leave at least 6” of stems at the base of the plant. Some buds will be a little higher than 6” on the stems and some will be almost at ground level, so as you do the fall clean-up, look for the buds and leave them to form spring blooms. After trimming the tops of the stems off the plant, gently pull out any old foliage that may be caught in the base, rake the area clean.

**After cleaning up your Peonies**, remove the old plant matter from the garden to help keep the area clean of any pests or foliar problems that may be present. Do not add them to compost.

**Newly planted Peonies** should have a 3-4” layer of mulch added in fall, but clean the mulch away from the plants in early spring, before the buds emerge.

Enjoy your beautiful Peonies for years to come!