

# Care for Ornamental Grasses in Solterra

Grasses are one of the dominant plants native to the Colorado plains. Native and adapted grasses have become a valued addition to the landscape within Solterra. The common areas and the rock beds all have grasses, both native and Ornamental. The Ornamental grasses add important elements to gardens that no other group of plants can – texture, color and movement. When summer flowers are gone, the grasses continue giving interest even on a winter's day.

But there can be a few drawbacks to planting and maintaining many of the more popular varieties. Many of the larger clump grasses such as Pampas and Maiden Grass can quickly overtake an area in just a few growing seasons. California considers Pampas grass as invasive and has made efforts to remove mature stands of the grass. In Solterra, we have an issue with the Dwarf Fountain Grasses that were planted 12



years ago, as their seeds have sprouted in the turf grass. The Karl Foerster Feather Reed grass seed heads are sterile, meaning they can't germinate as weeds when blown throughout flowerbeds.

Ornamental grasses should be cut back before new growth appears so it gives space for the new shoots. Since ornamental grasses still look neat into winter and can provide interest with the seed heads, most growers wait until late winter or early spring to cut the grass to the ground. The photo on the left shows that the grasses were not cut back in the winter and the new growth is trying to appear.

Our Landscaper, Schultz Industries, will be cutting back the grasses in the common areas at the end of February or the beginning of March, depending on the weather. When you notice that the Solterra grasses have been cut back, that is a good time for you to shear the grasses back before new growth appears. Use sterilized pruning shears or a hedge trimmer to cut the previous season's growth to 2 to 6 inches

above the soil line. For small or young plants, a good pair of shears and a bungee cord around the plant will easily do the trick. Hedge trimmers also work great for cutting back grasses. Cordless trimmers are a great choice for mobility and ease!

Ornamental grass clumps grow from the inside out. That means new growth is always be on the outside ring of the plant. After a few years, you may notice the middle area beginning to die off. When this happens, it is time to dig your plant up and replace it, or separate living divisions from dead tissue by hand and replant.

