

PLANTING TIPS FOR PERENNIALS

CHOOSING PERENNIALS

When buying perennials, look for fresh, healthy-looking plants that appear vigorous and ready to grow. Avoid overgrown, floppy or leggy-looking plants, or any that are small and struggling to stay alive. Certain perennials (especially those with daisy-type flowers) are so vigorous they are often root-bound in the pots; they usually overcome this quickly once planted in your garden. Any plants that have live insects or foliage diseases should be avoided, since they might start a bigger problem on plants already growing in your garden. The odd bent leaf or broken stem is usually an indication of slight damage during shipping, and this will not generally cause any long-term problems. Any moss, liverwort or other weeds in the pot should be picked out and discarded before planting.

HOLDING THE PLANTS

Although perennials may be held in their containers for a short period of time, up to three weeks or so, we recommend they be planted as soon as possible to avoid them accidentally drying out in the pots. The sooner you plant them, the faster they can become established in your garden. If you must wait to plant, perennials in pots will be happiest outside, so long as temperatures are above freezing. They may be held in the garage, garden shed, or even in the house overnight, but any longer than a day or two can cause them to stretch and possibly to lose some of their cold tolerance. Regular watering will be necessary, a couple of times a week during cool weather, every day during warm spells. A lightly shaded location will help to keep your perennials evenly moist.

WHEN TO PLANT

Mid to late Spring is the ideal time to plant. They can become well established before the heat of summer. Spring is also a good time to divide or transplant many types of perennials that you may have in your garden. Peonies, Iris and Oriental Poppies should not be divided in the spring, but can be planted from containers all season long. Perennials purchased in late winter or very early spring may need special handling, depending on where you live. Avoid putting perennials into the ground while there is still a good chance of hard frost at night.

Summer planting is very successful, so long as plants are not allowed to dry out. Watering is especially important if the weather is hot and dry. Transplanting or dividing perennials already established in your garden is not recommended during the summer, except for Bearded Iris and Oriental Poppies, which should be divided only in July or August.

Fall planting is highly recommended in most regions. Early-blooming varieties will put on a colorful display in spring if planted in the fall. Dividing or moving perennials in the fall is usually very successful. Winter frosts may "heave" fall-planted perennials. Check them in late winter, and if any have popped out of the ground, gently press them back in place.

HOW TO PLANT

Hold the pot upside-down and shake or tap it to loosen the roots. If lots of roots are visible, the plant may be root bound. If so, the root ball must be disturbed to force new, healthy root growth. To do this, take a sharp knife and slice off the bottom ½ inch of roots, and then rough up the sides of the rootball with your fingers or the knife tip. An alternate way is to slice into the bottom of the root ball with a "plus sign" or an "X", to a depth of about 1 inch.

With a spade or trowel, dig a hole deep enough to accommodate the root ball. For best planting results, use the puddling method; fill the hole with water, place the plant upright in the hole and fill in around the roots with soil. Pat the soil to thoroughly mix the soil and the water. This helps to eliminate any air pockets around the roots. Be sure the root ball surface is at or just slightly below the garden soil surface. After planting, spread a 2 – 3" layer of mulch, taking care to taper it down towards the plant stems so no mulch is touching them. Water a second time and follow with Plant World Plant Starter fertilizer.

WATERING

Water plants immediately after planting and once a week from then on, unless the weather is rainy. Summer plantings may require more frequent watering, especially during periods of drought. A slow, deep watering in the early morning is best.

FERTILIZING

Perennials may be fertilized with either a liquid or a slow release granular-type fertilizer. Established perennial beds benefit from a yearly spring application of slow release fertilizer or compost.

MAINTAINING YOUR PERENNIALS

Prune off any dead tops in late winter or early spring. Remove dead flowers regularly to encourage repeat blooming and clip back scruffy-looking plants to promote fresh, attractive growth. In late spring and early summer many perennials could use a good hard clip after blooming.

Control any pests and diseases as soon as noticed, to avoid spreading the problem to other plants. Stake tall plants like Peonies, Delphinium, and Summer Phlox before they reach 2' high to avoid wind damage later. Divide perennials when the center of the plant begins to die out with age.

Take the time to prepare your soil beds and insure they are free of perennial weeds. Perennials in pots can be held for several weeks if necessary until your site is ready.