

DIVIDING PERENNIALS

When to Divide Plants

Mid to late August is the ideal time to separate the following perennials: daylilies, Siberian iris, peonies, coneflowers, hosta, perennial salvia, nepeta, veronica, coreopsis, monarda, yarrow, spiderwort, and rudbeckia. Ornamental grasses can be divided in the fall, but the ideal time is in the early spring.

Prune all stems to the height of 4-6" for ease of handling. Division can be done several ways. Often the easiest method is to use a sharp shovel and remove sections (chunks) from the outside ring of the plant's root system.

Each segment should be a minimum of 4-6" across with a rootball about the size of a softball. Clumps of this size should flower next season. This method keeps the mother plant intact. Just fill back in around the original clump with amended soil.

Another method is to cut the stems down to 3-4" dig the entire clump, and divide the entire plant into smaller sections. A garden fork, knife, saw, or your hands will separate the large clump quite easily. This allows you to be able to completely relocate the entire plant.

Re-blooming daylilies, should be divided every 3-4 years for the best blooming performance. Siberian iris will develop a large dead center if they are not kept thinned, and the remaining outside stems often do not remain upright to present an attractive planting. Older peony plants should be dug up and damaged or hollow roots should be disposed of. Over time, soil washes in over the eye of the peony root causing the plant to produce no flowers. When a peony is re-set, the "pink" eye must be exactly 1 1/2" under the soil to ensure blooms.



Coreopsis, salvia, veronica, and nepeta will usually produce more flower heads and remain in bloom longer if the clumps are not allowed to become overgrown. Yarrow, monarda, & spiderwort will have less tendency to "flop" if the clumps are not too crowded.

Preparing the New Planting Site

It is important to amend heavy clay soils. Hand spade or till the planting site to the depth of 8-10". Adding compost and perlite to new beds is ideal. For increased acidity, add peat moss. If individual holes are your preferred method, mix the perlite and compost 50/50 in a wheelbarrow and use that mix as a 50/50 mix with the existing soil. Into the bottom of every planting hole, sprinkle *Myke* and *Geocharged* to improve root development and lower transplant shock. For an added boost, mix *Superthrive* at 3-4 Tbs per gallon of water, and water in the newly plantings. Mulch with a thin 2" layer of hardwood mulch that is kept back away from the stems at least 2-3". Do not use rock around perennials. Rock gets very hot in the sun, and will not retain moisture. Hardwood mulch will help keep the roots cool, retain moisture, and provide better insulation in the winter. Keep the plants well-watered, and stand back to watch how quickly these new plantings will begin a vigorous fall growth.

Spring Division

The following perennials will yield better transplant results if divided in spring:

Fall flowering sedum, Oriental or Asiatic lilies, asters, tall garden phlox, silver mound, gaillardia, Russian sage, all decorative grasses, mums, ferns astilbe, and groundcovers.

