



Dividing Your Perennials

Perennials should be divided when they are growing strongly and look healthy. Dividing a perennial when it is not going well will result in poor establishment. Also some perennials will start to die out in the center of the mass. This is a sure sign it is time to divide. This is very common among grasses, irises and sedum. Most perennials can be divided in fall or spring. Mid September is a wonderful time to divide. The soil is still warm enough for the roots to start re growing, thus giving the plant a great start in spring. Some plants such as Bleeding Hearts, Primroses, Anemone and Monkshood prefer to be divided in spring.

The following is a brief outline of how to divide your perennials.

- * Dig out the perennial in question using a spade. Dig at the plants Drip line (Where the leave end)
- * Clean off the larger chunks of soil, looking for insects and signs of disease.
 - * using a sharp knife (an old steak knife works great) cut the perennials into several divisions. Each new plant should contain two to four eyes (new buds). This will give you a nice size plant in the spring.
 - * Now replant the new sections. Adding some organic matter such as worm castings around the new plants is an excellent idea. Bone Meal in the planting hole will also give the roots a great start.
- * Water the plants thoroughly once planted.

It is best to divide your perennials on a cool day. This will prevent the roots from drying out. If you cannot put the plants back in the soil right away it is a good idea to cover the roots with a bit of soil or wet newspaper.

Divide in Fall or Spring

Bugleweed (*Ajuga reptans*)
Columbines (*Aquilegia* spp.)
Lady's mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*)
Pussytoes (*Antennaria dioica*)
Sea thrift (*Armeria maritima*)
Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)
Yarrow (*Achillea filipendulina*)
Amsonias (*Amsonia* spp.)
Astilbes (*Astilbe* spp.) S/F
Goatsbeard (*Aruncus dioicus*)
Bergenia (*Bergenia cordifolia*)
Wild indigo (*Baptisia australis*) *
Lily-of-the-valley (*Convallaria majalis*)
Bellflowers (*Campanula* spp.)
Snakeroot (*Cimicifuga racemosa*)
Tickseed (*Coreopsis verticillata*)
Turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*)
Pinks (*Dianthus plumarius*)
Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)
Joe Pye weed (*Eupatorium maculatum*)
Spurge (*Euphorbia griffithii*) *
Meadowsweets (*Filipendula* spp.)
Cranesbills (*Geranium* spp.)
Blanket flowers (*Gaillardia* spp.)

FERNS

Male fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*)
Lady fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*)
Japanese painted fern (*Athyrium niponicum* 'Pictum')
Native Fern

Divide in Fall Only

Sweet woodruff (*Galium odoratum*)
Siberian Iris (*Iris siberica*)
Irises (*Irisspp.*) F
Poppies (*Papaver* spp.)
Peonies (*Paeonia* spp.)
Moss pink (*Phlox subulata*)

Daylilies (*Hemerocallis* spp.)
Coral bells (*Heuchera* spp.)
Hostas (*Hosta* spp.)
Deadnettle (*Lamium maculatum*)
Creeping Jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*)
Daisy (*Leucanthemum x superbum*)
Ligularia (*Ligularia dentata*) S/F
Gayfeather (*Liatris spicata*) S/F
Lilyturf (*Liriope spicata*) S/F
Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*)
Bee balm (*Monarda didyma*)
Forget-me-not (*Myosotis sylvatica*) *
Catmint (*Nepeta x faassenii*)
Jacob's ladder (*Polemonium caeruleum*)
Pulmonarias (*Pulmonaria* spp.) *
Garden phlox (*Phlox paniculata*)
Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum odoratum*)
Rodgersia (*Rodgersia pinnata*)
Black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia* spp.)
Lamb's ears (*Stachys byzantina*)
Goldenrods (*Solidago* spp.)
Stonecrop (*Sedum spectabile*)
Speedwell (*Veronica spicata*)
Violets, pansies (*Viola* spp.)

GRASSES

Big bluestem grass (*Andropogon gerardii*)
Karl Foerster or Overdam Grasses (*Calamagrostis*)
Silver grasses (*Miscanthus* spp.)
Switch grass (*Panicum virgatum*)

Divide in Spring Only

Monkshood (*Aconitum napellus*)
Anemone (*Anemone x hybrida*)
Asters (*Aster* spp.)
Bleeding hearts (*Dicentra* spp.) *
Primroses (*Primula* spp.) *

These perennials are best not divided

Silvermound (*Artemisia schmidtiana*)
Carnation (*Dianthus caryophyllus*)
Delphinium (*Delphinium x elatum*)
Foxgloves (*Digitalis* spp.)
Sea hollies (*Eryngium* spp.)

Candytuft (*Iberis sempervirens*)
Lavenders (*Lavandula* spp.)
Sweet pea (*Lathyrus latifolius*)
Russian Sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*)
Trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*)

* Wear gloves sap may irritate skin.

Fall Perennial Care

Mid September is an excellent time to start dividing. This will allow the roots to re-establish themselves. Divide plants that have overgrown the spots or are starting to die out in the center. Also plants that did not bloom well. This is often a sign that it is time to divide.

Also at this time you can remove any diseased looking leaves and throw them away. You do not want to compost diseased leaves as it will spread the disease back to your garden.

Come Mid October after a hard frost you can start cutting your perennial back. As long as the perennial is still blooming or looking nice you do not have to cut it back. Perennials such as sedum, mums, ornamental grasses, rudbeckia, Echinacea often look great all winter long. The seed pods will also help feed the birds throughout winter.

If you live in an area or your perennial bed is in a spot that tends to get little snow cover it is best to leave the plants until spring. This will help catch the snow and give the plants more insulation.

Mulching with organic matter such as peat moss or woodchips is an excellent idea. This will give the plants extra insulation as well as add nutrients to the soil. You can add a shallow layer of mulch throughout the season to help keep moisture in and to improve the soil. Worming castings is an excellent addition around the roots. Winter mulch should be added in the late fall. The perennials need to shut down properly, thus putting mulch on too early will stop their natural shut down. This would harm the plant and lead to very poor growth the following season. Put your mulch on Late October to early November. Before snow falls. The mulch needs to be removed from the base of the plants as soon as the snow is gone (Early April). Leaving the mulch in place too long causes the new growth to rot or grow very tender.

Throughout the winter if the weather does not bring much snow it is a good idea to shovel snow on the area to give the plants more insulation. Be careful if you have used salts on your sidewalks. The salt can harm the perennials.