

Spring Perennial Care

Planting



Spring is a great time to add perennials to the landscape. Start by matching the site conditions with plant needs. This includes light, temperature, soil, drainage and space.

Plant perennials at the same depth as they were in the container. Carefully separate and spread out the existing roots to encourage them to grow away from the plant rather than encircling the root mass. Water thoroughly after planting. Until established, perennials will need to be checked regularly and watered when soil is dry. Once established, most perennials will benefit from about one-inch of water per week.

Rejuvenation

With proper care perennials will grow for multiple years. However, without periodic rejuvenation, over time growth may slow down and flowering may stop altogether.

In spring, roots are actively growing which makes this an ideal time for dividing perennials (with a few exceptions including: peonies, irises, daylilies). Roots that are damaged in the process are able to recover more quickly than at other times of the year. Young roots are able to become established and support the above ground growth.

Use a shovel to dig up the entire plant. Divide the root ball into as many sections as desired or warranted based on the type and size of plant. Dig as many holes as necessary at a depth that will allow the plant crown to sit at the same level as previously.

Backfill the soil and tamp gently to secure the plant and remove air spaces. Water thoroughly.



Mulch



Perennials that were buried under a layer of mulch for winter protection can be uncovered to allow new growth to emerge. Maintain a layer of mulch over the soil surface to preserve soil moisture and regulate soil temperature.

Leave a gap between the mulch and the stem of the plant. Mulch piled up too close to the plant can cause water to accumulate and damage the stem and roots. Two-inches of mulch is typically sufficient for shrub plantings.



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Fertilizing

Use a starter fertilizer when establishing new perennials. This provides nutrients for young plants and boosts their initial growth. Starter fertilizers are usually rich in phosphorus and can be purchased from a garden center.

Once established, adding a one-inch layer of compost to the perennial garden each year is typically sufficient to supplement nutrients. Additional fertilizers are not usually beneficial but can be added based on the results of soil testing.

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