



Bucks Country Gardens

Dividing Perennials

The division of perennials is usually the simplest and quickest method of propagation. It should be done when a plant has out-grown its allotted space or when a plant is not producing blooms as it once did.

It is best to divide perennials in the late winter or early spring, before the foliage reaches a height of two inches. Plants may also be divided in the fall, but be sure to give them adequate winter protection. After plants are divided, treat any cut surfaces with a fungicide.

Since most perennials are not moved after they have been planted, it is a good idea to improve the soil before replanting. Peat moss or compost plus bone meal will return nutrients to the soil.

Always protect plants from the sun or drying winds while they are unearthed. Never leave them unplanted for more than a day or two and keep them well watered if keeping them unprotected is unavoidable.

DIVISION OF YOUNG PERENNIALS

It is quite simple to divide perennials that are only two or three years old.

Larger divisions- those with three or more shoots-can be placed immediately in their permanent locations where they should bloom their first season. Smaller divisions should be planted in a separate bed until the following fall or spring when they can be transplanted to their permanent homes.

DIVISION OF MATURE PERENNIALS

Older perennials can be difficult to divide since the crowns and the shoots form a solid mass.

Lift the entire plant out of the ground. Force two garden forks, back to back, into the center of the clump and pry plant apart. After making the major division, use a sharp knife to cut away the older woodier portions in the center.

Trim rotten or damaged roots back to healthy tissues. Separate the pieces into sections with at least one bud on each. When planting, make sure that the growth buds are one to two inches below the ground.

Plants with extremely woody crowns cannot usually be split with forks. In such cases, cut through the crowns with a sharp knife, so that each portion has both roots and buds. Replant the divisions at once and water them well.