Easy to Divide Perennials

Asters—Divide in spring
Bearded Iris—Divide immediately after blooming. Inspect rhizomes for rot and iris borer.
Black-Eyed Susan—Divide spring
Daylily—Best to divide in the fall.
Hosta—Divide spring or fall
Mums—Divide in spring
Ornamental Grasses—Divide in spring for warm season grasses prior to growth and spring, fall, or winter for cool season grasses.
Peony—Divide in September only if needed
Perennial Geraniums—Divide in spring
Phlox—Divide in spring or fall
Purple Coneflower—Divide spring
Siberian Iris—Divide in spring or fall. Inspect rhizomes for rot and iris borer.

Perennials Best Left Undivided

Astillbe
Baby’s Breath
Blue False Indigo
Bugbane
Butterfly Weed
Lupine
Oriental Poppies
Silver Mound Artemesia

For more information on gardening please visit: http://web.extension.illinois.edu/state/horticulture/index.php or call University of Illinois Extension Knox County Office 309-342-5108

Other information brochures can be found online at http://web.extension.illinois.edu/hkmw/hort.html

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**Why Divide Perennials?**

Dividing perennials is a way to keep plants vigorous and healthy in the garden. After time, some perennials begin to produce fewer flowers, become over crowded, and can have trouble with insects and diseases.

This part of the garden maintenance process can be very rewarding. Increasing the number of plants in your garden or being able to give the gift of a perennial to a friend, neighbor, or relative is another benefit of division.

When planning for dividing perennials, make sure to stagger the division over multiple years to make the process easier and not overwhelming. Typically perennials need division every 3 to 5 years.

An additional indicator that a perennial needs to be divided is when they begin to die out in the center. Ornamental grasses are a good example of plants that show this characteristic.

**Tools For Dividing Perennials**

There are a few basic tools that are needed to properly divide perennials. The size of the plant that is to be divided will also help determine what tools will be needed.

Basic tools include shovels, spades, garden forks, large sharp knife, pruners, and gloves. Not all tools may be used when dividing plants, but it is good to have them on hand in case they are needed. Tools such as shovels and spades should be sharp and all tools should be clean.

**How To Divide Perennials**

Begin digging a circle 6 to 12 inches away from the base of the plant (depending on the size). In order to preserve as much of the root system as possible, dig as deep as needed. Not all plants have a deep root system and others grow very deep. Coral Bells, for example, are a very shallow rooted plant, whereas ornamental grasses grow much deeper.

Lift the clump out of the ground. Based on it's size, separate into 2 to 4 healthy divisions. When dividing a plant with a center that has died out, remove the dead areas and only keep the healthy portions.

If the divisions will not be immediately put back into the ground, make sure to keep them cool in a shaded area and the roots moist. Placing divisions in a large pot or tub will make care easier.

When planting the divided perennial, dig a hole larger than the root ball of the division and water thoroughly after planting. Keep the division well watered until established.

**When To Divide Perennials**

Although most perennials can be divided in either spring or fall, some prefer to be divided at certain times. Dividing at times other than those recommended may reduce or eliminate blooms for the current growing season. Avoid dividing perennials during their bloom time or when they are about to bloom.

Try to divide perennials on a cool, cloudy day to help minimize the shock to the plant. In spring it is best to divide perennials when they have developed 3 inches of growth. In fall, divide in late August through September to give plants time to establish a root system prior to winter weather. Tall plants divided in the fall may need to have foliage trimmed back.