

Transplanting from a Greenhouse

Annuals and perennials that come to us from the protected environment of a greenhouse, need a gradual introduction to direct sun before they are planted to prevent sunburn. Set your plants outdoors in a sheltered, lightly-shaded spot, increasing the amount of sun they receive each day. It is a good idea to do your planting on a cloudy day or late in the afternoon to avoid the heat of the mid-day sun and prevent undue shock to the plant.

When you are ready, move the plants in their pots to the location you want, keeping in mind the mature height and growing habits of them. Dig a hole three times the width of the pot, and twice as deep. Add a generous amount of compost, peat moss, and all-purpose (10-10-10) fertilizer according to directions. Blend the soil thoroughly then return it to the planting hole, leaving enough room in the center for the root ball.

Water the plant thoroughly, and then remove it from its pot by placing your hand over the root ball to support it, and inverting it. Then give the pot a couple of sharp raps with a trowel handle to loosen the roots. The container can now be lifted from the plant.

Using your fingers to gently pull the surface roots away from the root ball will induce the roots to once again grow outward. If the roots are seriously compacted, you may find it easier to make a few shallow cuts through the roots on the side and bottom of the root ball. Cut off any severely damaged roots prior to planting. The plant is placed into the hole at the same depth at which it grew in the pot, and the remaining soil is added. Water the plant thoroughly to insure the soil fills in completely around each root.

Mulch your new transplants with compost or some other organic matter to keep the roots cool and the soil moist, being careful to keep the mulch away from the crown of the plant. Set a garden stake in the hole if this is a taller plant, which will need support to reduce wind and rain damage. The stem should be tied to the support using strong, stretchy materials that won't cut into growing branches. Strips of old nylons will work very well for this.

After planting, monitor the condition of the plants for several days, making certain that the soil remains moist. Most perennials in the landscape need an inch of water a week during the growing season. If you're planting in baskets or boxes they will need to be checked daily for moisture. Remove spent blooms to prolong the flowering season (unless you plant to save the seeds).

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