



DIVIDING PERENNIALS

Perennials are divided to rejuvenate plants, increase their numbers, or control their size. The optimal time for division depends upon the perennial.

Tips on Dividing Perennials

Divide when the plant is healthy and looks good. Prune stems and foliage to six (6) inches from the ground - this helps to cut down moisture loss and makes division easier.

Take into account the type of root system:

- *Spreading root system*: can be pulled apart by hand or cut apart into clumps of 3 - 5 vigorous shoots each. Examples: Aster, bee balm, lamb's ear, purple coneflower
- *Clumping Root System*: cut with heavy, sharp knife through the central growing area. Leave at least one developing eye or bud with each section. Examples: astilbe, daylily, ornamental grasses
- *Rhizome Division*: from one month after flowering to end of September, cut healthy, young rhizomes with one fan of leaves cut back, a few inches long. Replant with the top of the rhizome just showing above soil level. Example: bearded iris
- *Tuberous roots*: cut with sharp knife retaining a piece of original stem and growth bud. Store pieces for spring planting. Example: Dahlia

Digging up

- Starting at the plant's natural drip line, dig a trench around the clump, cleanly severing any roots.
- Then cut at an angle down under the clump from various points around the edge until you can lever the plant out of the hole.
 - For very large plants, you might first dig the trench, then slice through the center of the plant (like a pie) halving or quartering the plant before undercutting and lifting out.

Dividing

- Use smaller vs. larger plant sections. Pieces for replanting should be at most 20% to 25% of the original clump. These smaller sections show the best growth and tend to produce stronger blooms.

- Watch for and discard unhealthy pieces. Examine clumps for eroded crowns and roots, and discolored stems.

Planting Divisions

Watch that the root tip does not turn up or curl back on itself to fit into an undersized hole or pot.

- Chemicals flowing from leafy stems to the roots regulate root tip growth. When a root is planted up instead of down, the natural flow is interrupted, resulting in a root tip that does not grow as vigorously.

Plant Name	spring	summer	fall	clumps	spreads	Comments
Artemisia <i>Artemisia spp.</i>	√				√	Roots easily, especially the tall, spreading types; divide mounding types every 3 to 4 years to prevent falling open in the center
Astilbe <i>Astilbe spp.</i>	√		√	√		Divide in early spring or after it stops blooming in late summer to early fall; will bloom better with regular division every 2 to 3 years
Bachelor's button <i>Centaurea Montana</i>	√		√		√	Easy to divide; needs to be divided often (every 1 to 2 years) to keep plants vigorous
Bearded Iris <i>Iris hybrids</i>		√		√		Divide in summer when flowering is over, at least 6 weeks before frost so plants have time to get established
Bee Balm <i>Monarda spp.</i>	√		√		√	Spreads quickly; easy to divide; for ease of handling, divide in spring as foliage is emerging
Blackberry lily <i>Belamcanda chinensis</i>	√			√		Divide so that each rhizome division has a fan of foliage; reseeds readily; new seedlings are easily transplanted
Black-eyed Susan <i>Rudbeckia spp.</i>	√		√	√		Easy to divide; divide every 3 to 4 years; for best appearance next season, don't make divisions too small
Blanket flower <i>Gaillardia xgrandiflora</i>	√		√	√		Easy to divide; roots usually pull apart easily by hand; divide every 3 to 4 years
Bleeding heart <i>Dicentra spp.</i>	√		√	√		Divide in late spring to early summer, after blooming but before foliage goes dormant in summer; roots are brittle to handle with care
Brunera <i>Brunnera macrophylla</i>	√	√		√		Divide in late spring to early summer, after blooming; will reseed but divide to keep specific cultivars true

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Butterfly weed <i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	√			√		Difficult to divide because of taproot; for best results, purchase new plants
Campanula <i>Campanula spp.</i>	√	√		√		Easy to divide; most are clump-forming, although some are spreaders
Columbine <i>Aquilegia hybrids</i>			√	√		Doesn't like to be disturbed; do in late summer to early fall if necessary; reseeds easily so that may be a better way to get more plants
Coreopsis <i>Coreopsis spp.</i>	√	√		√		Roots easily; dividing every 2 to 3 years will keep plants alive longer as they tend to be short-lived if left undisturbed
Daylily <i>Hemerocallis hybrids</i>	√		√	√		Divides easily; make sure that each division has 2 or 3 shoots; will bloom better if divided regularly
Delphinium <i>Delphinium spp.</i>	√			√		Blooms best if divided down into small sections; regular division (every 2 to 3 years) will prolong plants' life
European Wild Ginger <i>Asarum europaeum</i>	√		√		√	Easy to divide in spring or early fall
Fall anemone <i>Anemone spp.</i>	√			√		<i>Doesn't like to have main clump disturbed; sends out underground runners, so dig small new plants around the edges to transplant</i>
False indigo <i>Baptisia australis</i>	√			√		<i>Difficult to divide because of taproot; for best results, purchase new plants; if you have to divide, dig deep</i>
Feather reed grass <i>Calamagrostis acutiflora</i>		√		√		<i>Divide in spring; lift entire clump and cut into sections, may need saw or hatchet to divide roots</i>
Garden mum <i>Chrysanthemum hybrids</i>	√			√		<i>Easy to divide; divide every 2 to 3 years to keep plants blooming and vigorous; discard dead central portion</i>
Geranium, hardy <i>Geranium spp.</i>	√		√	√		<i>Most species rarely need dividing, but divides easily; most can be pulled apart by hand</i>
Globe thistle <i>Echinops ritro</i>	√			√		<i>Reseeds; new seedlings can be transplanted; will often flower in summer after spring division</i>
Goldenrod <i>Solidago spp.</i>	√		√	√		<i>Divide every 3 to 5 years to keep plants vigorous</i>
Hosta <i>Hosta hybrids</i>	√	√	√	√		<i>Easy to divide in early spring when foliage is emerging; dividing large clumps later won't harm plants but leaves them lopsided for the summer</i>

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Joe-Pye weed <i>Eupatorium purpureum</i>	✓		✓	✓		Divide in early spring for easy handling; for fall division, cut back flowers; may need a saw or hatchet to cut apart woody crown
Lady's mantle <i>Alchemilla mollis</i>	✓		✓	✓		Divide in spring or fall; easiest in early spring as leaves begin to emerge; doesn't need frequent division
Lily of the valley <i>Convallaria majalis</i>	✓				✓	Divide in early spring or after blooming; spreads rapidly to divide often to establish new areas of groundcover
Maiden grass <i>Miscanthus spp.</i>	✓			✓		Divide in early spring; use a hatchet or saw to cut clump apart; can dig whole clump to divide or chop out segments
New England aster <i>Aster novae-angliae</i>	✓			✓		Divide every 2 to 3 years to prevent dead centers in clumps; discard dead central portion on older clumps
Oriental poppy <i>Papaver orientale</i>		✓		✓		Has taproot, so difficult to divide; but if necessary, divide in early summer after flowering
Peony <i>Paeonia spp.</i>		✓	✓	✓		Rarely needs to be divided; make sure each division has at least 3 eyes (growing points); may take several years to bloom after dividing
Purple coneflower <i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	✓		✓	✓		Easy to divide; divide every 4 to 5 years for healthier plants
Salvia <i>Salvia spp.</i>	✓		✓	✓		Divide every 5 or 6 years or when plants dies out in the center
Sedum (tall) <i>Sedum spp.</i>	✓		✓	✓		Can be divided into summer; easiest to divide in spring when foliage is still small
Sneeze-weed <i>Helenium hybrids</i>	✓			✓		Divide in early spring when foliage is just emerging; dividing every 3 or 4 years will keep plants vigorous and blooming heavily.
Tall garden phlox <i>Phlox paniculata</i>	✓		✓	✓		Easy to divide; regular division keeps clumps smaller, less prone to powdery mildew; discard woody, dead center of clump
Veronica <i>Veronica spicata</i>	✓		✓	✓		Easy to divide; dividing keeps clumps smaller so they don't fall apart in the middle
Yarrow <i>Achillea spp.</i>	✓	✓			✓	Easy to divide; most types spread quickly so divide every 2 to 3 years