

Dividing Perennials, It's Almost Time

Late summer to early fall marks a quiet shift in the garden—the frenzied burst of spring growth settles, the vibrant bloom of midsummer fades, and cooler days begin to whisper through the leaves. For gardeners, this window is not just a seasonal transition, but a golden opportunity to rejuvenate the backbone of the landscape: perennials. If your Hostas are crowding their neighbors or your daylilies have stopped blooming as boldly as before, it may be time to divide and conquer.

Why Divide?

Dividing perennials is not just about aesthetics – it is essential for plant health and longevity. Over time, many clumping perennials outgrow their space, leading to:

- Reduced flowering
- Competition for nutrients and moisture
- Increased risk of disease and pest issues

By dividing, you invigorate the parent plant, improve air circulation, and prevent overcrowding. Plus, it is a free way to multiply your favorite plants and redesign garden beds without a trip to the nursery.

<https://extension.umn.edu/planting-and-growing-guides/dividing-perennials>

When Is the Right Time?

Not all perennials play by the same seasonal rules. The general guideline is to divide spring and early-summer bloomers in fall, and fall-bloomers in spring. Why? This timing allows plants to recover and establish strong root systems before their peak blooming season.

For Tulsa-area gardeners, late August to early October is ideal. The soil remains warm enough to encourage root growth, and the cooler weather helps prevent transplant shock. Be sure to divide at least 4-6 weeks before the first hard frost to allow for proper rooting.

Perennials That Benefit from Fall Division:

- **Daylilies (Hemerocallis)**
- **Hostas**
- **Black-eyed Susans (Rudbeckia)**
- **Yarrow (Achillea)**
- **Bee balm (Monarda)**
- **Coneflowers (Echinacea)**



How to Divide: Step-by-Step

1. **Prepare the Plant:** Water the plant well the day before to reduce stress.
2. **Dig Deep:** Use a spade or fork to dig around the root ball, preserving as many roots as possible.
3. **Lift and Inspect:** Gently lift the plant and shake off excess soil to inspect the roots.
4. **Divide:** Cut or pull the clump into smaller sections, each with roots and several shoots.
5. **Replant Promptly:** Place divisions in well-prepped soil with good drainage, keeping the crown at soil level.
6. **Water and Mulch:** Water thoroughly and apply mulch to retain moisture and moderate soil temperature.

<https://www.almanac.com/when-and-how-divide-perennials>

What to Do with Extras?

Dividing often yields more plants than you need. Consider:

- Expanding your own garden beds
- Sharing with neighbors and/or garden clubs
- Potting up for spring plant swaps

Post-Division Care Tips

Newly divided plants need a little pampering. Keep them consistently moist for the first few weeks, especially during warm spells. Avoid fertilizing immediately after dividing. It is much better to wait until spring when new growth emerges.

By investing some time now in dividing your perennials, you are setting the stage for healthier, more vibrant gardens next year and giving yourself the joy of rediscovery come spring. As with many garden tasks, it is not just about maintenance but an act of renewal.

Be sure to stay tuned into this newsletter as next spring we will discuss the process of spring division.