

Divide and Conquer: Propagation by Division

One of the easiest and most common means of increasing many herbaceous perennials is by splitting or dividing into two or more individuals. Each new division consists of roots and shoots or a piece of a crown which will develop shoots.

Reason For Division

- the plant is getting too large
- the plant is becoming “burned-out” - dead in the centre, but healthy around the outside edges
- you want to plant a piece in a different part of your garden
- share with a friend

Cruel to be Kind

Division consists of digging up a plant with a sharp spade and/or fork, slicing or dividing the root ball into two or more pieces, then replanting in renewed soil.

Timing is Everything

The best time to divide plants is in early spring. The second best is early fall.

Generally speaking you would divide spring blooming plants in the fall and summer, and fall blooming plants in the spring, however there are exceptions.

A New Lease On Life

When replanting the divisions, it is a good idea to amend the soil beforehand with compost, leaf mold, peat moss or well rotted manure. Space the pieces about six to eight inches apart for smaller pieces, and a foot apart for larger pieces. A sprinkle of bone meal in the hole before planting will help establish new roots. Roots should be spread out as best as possible, not just poked in the hole in a tangle. Firm soil around the roots to avoid air pockets that can fill with water and cause root rot.

Points to Ponder

A common mistake is to make the divisions too big. In most cases, the best results come from smaller divisions with fewer stems. This gives the opportunity for newer shoots to develop out into fresh soil. Usually outer portions of the main clump are likely more vigorous than weaker inner parts.

Water Water Everywhere

Always water-in the transplants even in damp weather. The water will not only provide needed moisture to the disturbed root system but also help to settle the soil around the roots.