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Perennial Propagation

You can always buy new potted plants to expand your perennial garden, but if you'd like to multiple what you currently have, new plants can be grown from division, stem cuttings, root cuttings or seed.

Division

Several factors have to be considered when dividing perennials. First, don't divide in the hottest part of the year, or in the driest part. Also avoid the very late fall, when winter is approaching, or the roots won't have time to put out new fibrous feeder roots and will freeze out over winter. In our area, most perennials will be best divided in spring when they are showing just a couple of inches of green growth. If the growth reaches 5 inches or more, successful division becomes less sure. If dividing plants with foliage, cut back $\frac{2}{3}$ of length, leaving $\frac{1}{3}$ of the leaves. Plants that bloom in April and May should be divided after bloom. Fall blooming plants must be divided in spring. Never divide a plant when it's getting ready to bloom, for then all its energy is going toward reproduction, not growth. Dividing at this time produces divisions that are confused, sulky, and prone to die out.

When dividing, keep a pail of water handy and soak any divisions that have lost their soil. This prevents the roots from drying out, since dried roots are usually dead roots. Crowns are the growing points of the plant, and in most perennials new ones appear on roots pushing out from the base of the plant. These fresh roots with new crowns are taken as root divisions. For a full mass of bloom in summer keep roots with 3-5 crowns, which also make them reestablish easier. There are those that like to be completely divided into single crowns (Liriope, Aquilegia, Convallaria, Bergenia, Aster and Chrysanthemum).

A few plants like their crowns set about an inch lower in the soil than where they were growing when you started dividing (Peonies, Heuchera/Coral bells and Bearded iris). With almost every other perennial, crowns should be planted at the level they were growing, or so their growing points are at or just above soil level. For these, setting the crowns too low promotes rot.

Some perennials divide easily and love it. Hostas and Hemerocallis, for instance, simply need to be spaded apart and replanted, then watered in. There are exceptions, some plants intolerant of division are Aconitum, Asclepias, Baptisia, Dictamnus, Euphorbia, Gypsophiola, Helleborus, Limonium, Oriental poppies, Platycodon, and Thermopsis.

Perennials that need Dividing Every Year or Two

Achillea	Eupatorium
Anthemis	Helenium
Artemisia lactiflora	Helianthus
Aster novae-angliae	Lysimachia
Aster novi-belgii	Physostegia
Boltonia asteroides	Primula
Cerastium tomentosum	Rudbeckia
Chrysanthemum	Solidago

Root Cuttings

Quite a few perennials grow fresh roots around their periphery, and from these roots little rosettes of new leaves emerge. To divide these plants, simply cut off the roots with the rosettes near the old portion of the clump. Look over the fresh root pieces carefully, and replant only the plump-looking healthy ones. Many perennials grow from underground runners. To divide these, simply spade out a shovelful of earth with the runners in it, and replant elsewhere at the same depth. Water well.

Hard to Transplant Perennials – Propagate by potting up pieces of roots

Anemone	Gypsophila paniculata
Asclepias tuberosa	Limonium latifolia
Baptisia australis	Papaver orientale
Dicentra spectabilis	Stokesia laevis
Echinops ritro	Thermopsis caroliniana
Eryngium amethystinum	Yucca filamentosa