

Planting Perennials

Preparation:

Perennials should be planted in an area of the garden/landscape that has good air circulation. This will help avoid or cut down on disease problems.

With preplanning and moderate attention, perennials will live 3 years and beyond. They like soil rich in organic matter with excellent drainage.

Loosen up the soil with a spade, hoe, or fork. Mix in organic matter such as aged manure, aged compost, leaf mold, or pine bark humus. If the area does not drain very good, mix in some sand or tiny gravel or create raised beds. Most perennials enjoy a pH of around 5.5 to 6.5 (depending on the normal soil level in the area). Soil testing is recommended, as fertilizer is a soil-balancing agent.

Without a soil test, use a neutral fertilize such as 10-10-10 in timed-release granular form. Follow the directions on the label.

Planting:

Plant perennials in holes that are about 8 to 10 inches deep and about 10 to 16 inches in width to promote side growth. Plant to the crown or just above the root system. Fill in with additional soil and water well to remove the air pockets. Then apply more soil to top off. Water every few days for the first couple of weeks unless there is daily rainfall. After a couple of weeks, taper off the watering down to once every 4-7 days depending on local weather. Allow the soil to dry before watering again. Try to avoid getting water on the leaves or flowers. Mulch with a 1-2 inch layer of compost, pine bark, pine straw or other natural mulch. This will help cut down on weed problems and keep the ground cool and moist.

Care:

Weeding is best handled by the hand method of pulling the weeds up at least during the first year in the ground. Many newly planted perennials may not bloom

during their first year. Some perennials such as Echinacea, which is a taller growing variety, may need support by staking them with bamboo or other wooden or metal stakes and string. Deadheading flowers will encourage new blooms and new growth. After their blooming period, if a perennial looks a bit withered, cut it back almost to the ground and allow it to produce new growth. In fall/winter, remove all dead foliage and stems, then mulch for seasonal protection.