



When to Divide Perennials

Herbaceous perennials are commonly divided for three reasons: to control size, to rejuvenate plants, and to propagate a prized perennial. Vigorous perennials may grow so rapidly that they crowd out neighboring plants in the flower bed. Other perennials decline in vigor if not divided at the appropriate time. One of the easiest ways to propagate a prized perennial is to divide the plant into two or more smaller plants.



The best time to divide perennials varies with the different plant species. The appropriate times to divide widely grown perennials are listed below.

- **Aster** (*Aster* species)—Divide every 2 or 3 years in spring.
- **Astilbe** (*Astilbe* species)—Divide every 3 or 4 years in spring.
- **Baby's Breath** (*Gypsophila paniculata*)—Division is difficult, carefully divide in spring or late summer/early fall.
- **Basket-of-Gold** (*Aurinia saxatilis*)—Divide in late summer/early fall. Basket-of-gold also can be propagated by stem cuttings in spring or late summer.
- **Bee Balm** (*Monarda didyma*)—Divide every 2 or 3 years in spring.
- **Blanket Flower** (*Gaillardia × grandiflora*)—Divide in spring.
- **Blazing Star** (*Liatris* species)—Divide in spring.
- **Bleeding Heart** (*Dicentra* species)—Best done in spring. Also can be divided in late summer/early fall.
- **Butterfly Weed** (*Asclepias tuberosa*)—A taproot makes division difficult. However, butterfly weed is easily propagated by seeds.
- **Chrysanthemum** (*Chrysanthemum × morifolium*)—Divide mums every 2 or 3 years in spring.
- **Columbine** (*Aquilegia* species)—Many species and varieties are short-lived. Division is difficult, carefully divide in late summer.
- **Coral Bells** (*Heuchera* species)—Divide in spring or late summer/early fall.
- **Coreopsis** (*Coreopsis* species)—Divide in spring or late summer/early fall.
- **Cornflower** (*Centaurea* species)—Requires division every 2 or 3 years. Divide in spring.
- **Daylily** (*Hemerocallis* species)—Divide in spring or late summer/early fall.
- **Delphinium** (*Delphinium* species)—Usually short-lived, division is seldom necessary.
- **False Indigo** (*Baptisia australis*)—Division is difficult because of its long taproot. Plants can be started from seeds.
- **Gooseneck Loosestrife** (*Lysimachia clethroides*)—Plants spread aggressively. Divide every 2 or 3 years in spring.
- **Hardy Geranium** (*Geranium* species)—Divide in spring or late summer/early fall.
- **Hardy Zinnia** (*Heliopsis helianthoides*)—Divide every other year in spring or late summer/early fall.
- **Hosta** (*Hosta* species)—Plants can be left undisturbed for years. If additional plants are desired, divide clumps in spring or late summer/early fall.
- **Iris, Bearded** (*Iris* hybrids)—Divide every 3 to 5 years in July or August.
- **Iris, Siberian** (*Iris sibirica*)—Divide after blooming in early summer.



For more information

Horticultural information on selection, planting, cultural practices, and environmental quality is available from your local Iowa State University Extension office and from these websites:

<https://store.extension.iastate.edu/>
<https://hortnews.extension.iastate.edu/>
www.reimangardens.iastate.edu

If you want to learn more about horticulture through training and volunteer work, ask your ISU Extension office for information about the ISU Extension Master Gardener program.



Prepared by Richard Jauron, extension horticulturist.

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- **Lily-of-the-Valley** (*Convallaria majalis*)—A rapidly spreading groundcover, divide in spring.
- **Lungwort** (*Pulmonaria* species)—Divide in spring after plants have flowered.
- **Obedient Plant** (*Physostegia virginiana*)—Plants spread rapidly. Divide plants every 2 or 3 years in spring.
- **Oriental Poppy** (*Papaver orientale*)—Divide when plants die back in mid- to late summer.
- **Orange Coneflower** (*Rudbeckia fulgida*)—Divide every 3 or 4 years in spring.
- **Ornamental Grasses**—Spring is the best time to divide ornamental grasses. Also can be divided in late summer/early fall.
- **Peony** (*Paeonia* hybrids)—Peonies are long-lived and can be left undisturbed for many years. If additional plants are desired, divide clumps in September.
- **Perennial Salvia** (*Salvia* hybrids)—Divide plants in spring.
- **Phlox, Garden** (*Phlox paniculata*)—Divide every 3 or 4 years in spring or late summer/early fall.
- **Phlox, Moss** (*Phlox subulata*)—Divide plants in spring immediately after blooming.
- **Purple Coneflower** (*Echinacea purpurea*)—Divide every 3 or 4 years in spring.
- **Shasta Daisy** (*Leucanthemum × superbum*)—Tends to be short-lived. Divide plants in spring.
- **Speedwell** (*Veronica* species)—Divide in spring or late summer/early fall.
- **Spiderwort** (*Tradescantia virginiana*)—Spiderworts are rapidly spreading plants. Divide every 2 or 3 years in spring.
- **Stonecrop** (*Sedum* species)—Divide in spring.
- **Yarrow** (*Achillea* species)—Many of the yarrows spread rapidly. Divide every 2 or 3 years in spring.

In spring, divide plants just as new growth emerges. Most perennials divided in late summer/early fall (mid-August through September) should be mulched in November. A 4- to 6-inch layer of straw placed over the plants should reduce the possibility of winter injury. Remove the mulch in early April.