

# Garden Tips

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## Can You Dig It?

Before you make a new perennial bed or enlarge an existing bed or border, you'll want to mark off the area with lime, flour, stakes and string, or a flexible garden hose. When you're ready to dig, slice off the sod by sliding a spade under the roots. Compost the turf or use it to patch bare spots in your yard.

If you want to grow perennials, nothing is as important as good soil with lots of organic matter. Most perennials crave a rich, humus-filled soil that is moisture retentive and well-drained. Whether your soil is sandy or clay, just load in the compost and mix it in deep. Compost is simply decomposed organic matter — leaves, grass clippings, farm animal manure, vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, scrunched egg shells, and finely chopped brush and wood chips. Read up on making your own compost, it really works, and your garden will love you for it.

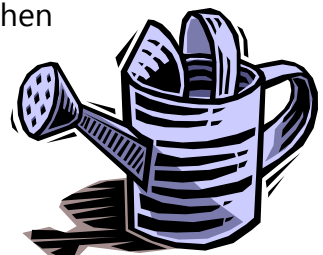


After removing the turf, turn the soil, add compost or other organic matter (and LOTS of it), then work the area again with your fork or spade. Water it well to settle the soil. For the health of your perennial beds, add a few inches of organic material each year, to build up a loose, friable (crumbly) loam soil. Your roots will love you for it.

## Go Forth and Multiply!

Division is the simplest and most reliable way to increase your perennial stock. It is also an excellent way to rejuvenate old, overgrown perennials that no longer flower well, or are crowding others. As a rule of thumb, divide mid-summer/fall blooming perennials in early spring, and spring/early summer bloomers in late summer or early fall.

Dig up the mother plant. With a very sharp tool the right size for the job (a spade, or knife...I often use a cleaver), cut the plant in two, and then again, for more plants. Remember, division shocks your plants—treat them with tender care, plant ASAP, remove half of the foliage, mulch well, water generously.



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## Design Basics for Your Own Perennial Garden

Consider these six basic steps when planning your next garden bed. But before you ever lay a shovel in the ground, remember that much of the joy of gardening comes from viewing the fruits of your labor. Place your garden beds where you are certain to enjoy them!

There are plenty of books on this subject, so read up. In the meantime, here are six basics for you to consider. Most important rule of all — don't be afraid to experiment! Most perennial plants are quite forgiving if properly planted; if you don't like where it is this year...move it!

### **1. Make an interesting shape.**

Good design starts with an interesting shape. Curving edges look natural, less formal, and help draw the eye along as you plant flowers in graceful swaths.

### **2. Plant in tiers...at different heights.**

Most garden beds look best when planted with an array of heights: small plants in the front and tall plants in the back. Size and height add interest; color and texture are important too.

### **3. Plant for color from spring through fall.**

Well-designed beds will have drifts, or swaths of color — producing a pleasant wave or two of bright color at any given moment from spring through fall. The trick is to fill your bed with plants that have different bloom periods. Keep in mind, if you're not usually here early in the Adirondack gardening season, skip the spring bulbs and plant for summer and fall enjoyment.

### **4. Include plants with interesting or colorful foliage.**

Key to a more mature garden design is the use interesting or colorful foliage.

### **5. Plant in drifts.**

For an excellent design, flowers look best planted in "drifts" — groups of three or more plants of one species planted in longer, narrower plantings. The garden is more graceful and drifts give a sense of movement. And don't forget...plan your planting so the drifts will bloom in succession.

### **6. Mix plants for contrast and drama.**

Break the rules! Go ahead and combine plants that contrast sharply in height, color, texture or shape. Your garden will be more beautiful and keep your interest longer.



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*"Garden Tips" provided courtesy of Karen Hanley and*

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