

Tips you need to know before you start

Best Time to Divide Perennials

BEFORE YOU DIVIDE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Plant name	spring	summer	fall	clumps	spreads	Tips for successful dividing
Artemisia <i>Artemisia</i> spp.	✓				✓	Roots easily, especially the tall, spreading types; some types clump, divide clumps every 3 to 4 years to prevent falling open in the center
Aster, New England <i>Aster novae-angliae</i>	✓			✓		Divide every 2 to 3 years to prevent dead centers in clumps; discard dead central portion on older clumps
Astilbe <i>Astilbe</i> spp.	✓		✓	✓		Divide in early spring or after it stops blooming in late summer to early fall; will bloom better with regular division (every 2 to 3 years)
Astrantia <i>Astrantia</i>	✓		✓	✓		Divide when new shoots begin to emerge, every 4 or 5 years
Baby's breath <i>Gypsophila paniculata</i>	✓			✓		Divide in spring if necessary, but does not like to be disturbed
Bachelor's button <i>Centaurea montana</i>	✓		✓		✓	Easy to divide; needs to be divided often (every 1 to 2 years) to keep plants vigorous
Barrenwort <i>Epimedium</i> spp.	✓			✓		Doesn't need to be divided often; if necessary, divide in early spring before flowering or right after flowering is done; some spread
Bearded iris <i>Iris</i> hybrids		✓		✓		Divide in summer when flowering is over, at least 6 weeks before frost so plants have time to get established
Bee balm <i>Monarda</i> spp.	✓		✓		✓	Spreads quickly; easy to divide; for ease of handling, divide in spring as foliage is emerging
Bergenia <i>Bergenia</i> hybrids	✓	✓			✓	Will need dividing about every 4 years in moist, fertile soil; less frequently in dry soil
Blackberry lily <i>Belamcanda chinensis</i>	✓			✓		Divide so that each rhizome division has a fan of foliage; reseeds readily; new seedlings are easily transplanted
Black-eyed Susan <i>Rudbeckia</i> spp.	✓		✓	✓		Easy to divide; divide every 3 to 4 years; for best appearance next season, don't make divisions too small
Black snakeroot <i>Actaea racemosa</i>	✓		✓	✓		Seldom needs to be divided; be sure to keep transplants moist, especially in sunny areas; some spread
Blanket flower <i>Gaillardia xgrandiflora</i>	✓		✓	✓		Easy to divide; roots usually pull apart by hand; divide every 3 to 4 years
Blazing star <i>Liatris spicata</i>	✓			✓		Easy to divide; divide every 4 or 5 years to keep plants vigorous
Bleeding heart <i>Dicentra</i> spp.	✓		✓	✓		Divide in late spring to early summer, after blooming but before foliage goes dormant in summer; roots are brittle so handle with care
Blue star <i>Amsonia</i> spp.	✓		✓	✓		Seldom needs to be divided; grows slowly so will take several years to establish from divisions
Boltonia <i>Boltonia asteroides</i>	✓		✓	✓		Easy to divide; divide every 3 or 4 years for new plants and to control spread
Brunnera <i>Brunnera macrophylla</i>	✓	✓		✓		Divide in late spring to early summer, after blooming; will reseed but divide to keep specific cultivars true

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Bugleweed <i>Ajuga reptans</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	Spreads by runners and roots easily; will root most quickly in spring and fall but can be divided any time of year
Butterfly weed <i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	✓			✓		Difficult to divide because of taproot; for best results, purchase new plants
Campanula <i>Campanula</i> spp.	✓	✓		✓		Easy to divide; most are clump-forming, although some are spreaders
Catmint <i>Nepeta</i> spp.	✓			✓		Divides easily; can also be divided after first flush of bloom if cut back and carefully watered
Columbine <i>Aquilegia</i> hybrids			✓	✓		Doesn't like to be disturbed; do in late summer to early fall if necessary; reseeds easily so that may be a better way to get more plants
Coral bells <i>Heuchera</i> hybrids	✓		✓	✓		Easy to divide; divide about every 3 years; discard old, woody central portion of clump
Coreopsis <i>Coreopsis</i> spp.	✓	✓		✓		Roots easily; dividing every 2 to 3 years will keep plants alive longer as they tend to be short-lived if left undisturbed
Daylily <i>Hemerocallis</i> hybrids	✓		✓	✓		Divides easily; make sure that each division has 2 or 3 shoots; will bloom better if divided regularly
Delphinium <i>Delphinium</i> spp.	✓			✓		Blooms best if divided down into small sections; regular division (every 2 to 3 years) will prolong plants' life
Dianthus <i>Dianthus</i> spp.	✓			✓		Divide every few years to extend plant life; tends to be short-lived if left undisturbed
European wild ginger <i>Asarum europaeum</i>	✓		✓		✓	Easy to divide in spring or early fall; deep, fibrous roots smell like black pepper
Fall anemone <i>Anemone</i> spp.	✓			✓		Doesn't like to have main clump disturbed; sends out underground runners, so dig small new plants around the edges to transplant
False indigo <i>Baptisia australis</i>	✓			✓		Difficult to divide because of taproot; for best results, purchase new plants; if you have to divide, dig deep to get entire root system
Feather reed grass <i>Calamagrostis acutiflora</i>		✓		✓		Divide in spring; lift entire clump and cut into sections
Garden mum <i>Chrysanthemum</i> hybrids	✓			✓		Easy to divide; divide every 2 to 3 years to keep plants blooming and vigorous; discard dead central portion
Gas plant <i>Dictamnus</i> spp.	✓			✓		Difficult to divide; for best results, purchase new plants
Gaura <i>Gaura</i> spp.	✓			✓		Difficult to divide because of taproot; better to purchase new plants
Geranium, hardy <i>Geranium</i> spp.	✓		✓	✓		Most species rarely need dividing, but divides easily; most can be pulled apart by hand
Geum <i>Geum</i> spp.	✓		✓	✓		Divide in spring or late summer to early fall if needed; tends to be short-lived so does not need frequent division
Globe thistle <i>Echinops ritro</i>	✓			✓		Reseeds; new seedlings can be transplanted; will often flower in summer after spring division; for best success, divide young plants
Goat's beard <i>Aruncus dioicus</i>	✓			✓		Rarely needs to be divided; tough roots make dividing difficult; leave plenty of room around new transplants because the plant gets large
Goldenrod <i>Solidago</i> spp.	✓		✓	✓		Divide every 3 to 5 years to keep plants vigorous
Hellebore <i>Helleborus</i> spp.	✓			✓		Rarely needs to be divided; if you do divide, do it in early spring while plants are in bloom or right after they stop flowering

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Hosta <i>Hosta hybrids</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓		Easy to divide in early spring when foliage is emerging; dividing large clumps later won't harm plants but leaves them lopsided for the summer
Japanese painted fern <i>Athyrium niponicum pictum</i>	✓		✓	✓		Rarely needs to be divided, so divide only for new plants, every 7 to 8 years
Joe-Pye weed <i>Eupatorium purpureum</i>	✓		✓	✓		Divide in early spring for easy handling; for fall division, cut back flowers; may need a saw or hatchet to cut apart woody crown
Lady's mantle <i>Alchemilla mollis</i>	✓		✓	✓		Divide in spring or fall; easiest in early spring as leaves begin to emerge; doesn't need frequent division
Lily-of-the-valley <i>Convallaria majalis</i>	✓				✓	Divide in early spring or after blooming; spreads rapidly so divide often to establish new areas of ground cover
Lilyturf <i>Liriope spicata</i>	✓				✓	Spreads rapidly by underground stolons, so divide often for new plants; can go without division when used as a ground cover
Maiden grass <i>Miscanthus spp.</i>	✓			✓		Divide in early spring; use a hatchet or saw to cut clump apart; can dig whole clump to divide or chop out segments
Monkshood <i>Aconitum spp.</i>	✓		✓	✓		Seldom needs to be divided; all parts of the plant are poisonous, so wear gloves and handle with care
Obedient plant <i>Physostegia virginiana</i>	✓				✓	Divides and roots easily; spreads rapidly so can be divided often (every 1 to 3 years) for more plants or to thin the bed out
Oriental poppy <i>Papaver orientale</i>		✓		✓		Has taproot, so difficult to divide; but if necessary, divide in early summer after flowering; can take root cuttings for more plants
Peony <i>Paeonia spp.</i>		✓	✓	✓		Rarely needs to be divided; make sure each division has at least 3 eyes (growing points); may take several years to bloom after dividing
Phlox, tall garden <i>Phlox paniculata</i>	✓		✓	✓		Easy to divide; regular division keeps clumps smaller, less prone to powdery mildew; discard woody, dead center of clump
Plumbago <i>Ceratostigma plumbaginoides</i>	✓				✓	In good growing conditions, can spread rapidly, so divide often for new plants and to keep under control
Purple coneflower <i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	✓		✓	✓		Easy to divide; divide every 4 to 5 years for healthier plants; reseeds, and seedlings are easy to transplant
Russian sage <i>Perovskia atriplicifolia</i>				✓		Very difficult to divide because of taproot; for best results, purchase new plants
Salvia <i>Salvia spp.</i>	✓		✓	✓		Divide every 5 or 6 years or when plant dies out in the center
Sedum (tall) <i>Sedum spp.</i>	✓		✓	✓		Can be divided into summer; easiest to divide in spring when foliage is still small
Shasta daisy <i>Leucanthemum xsuperbum</i>	✓		✓	✓		Divide every 3 or 4 years to keep plants vigorous; discard woody central portion of clump; may need two garden forks to pry clump apart
Sneezeweed <i>Helenium hybrids</i>	✓			✓		Divide in early spring when foliage is just emerging; dividing every 3 or 4 years will keep plants vigorous and blooming heavily
Sunflower, perennial <i>Helianthus spp.</i>	✓			✓		Divide every 3 to 4 years; most of these plants are large, so divide early in spring while they're still small enough to handle
Turtlehead <i>Chelone lyonii</i>	✓		✓	✓		Divide about every 4 years or as needed; if you divide in fall, wait until the plant is done flowering
Veronica <i>Veronica spicata</i>	✓		✓	✓		Easy to divide; dividing keeps clumps smaller so they don't fall apart in the middle
Yarrow <i>Achillea spp.</i>	✓	✓			✓	Easy to divide; most types spread quickly so divide every 2 to 3 years; some form clumps