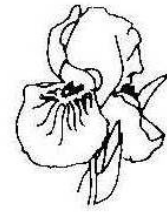


# PERENNIALS

## Tips for the Home Gardener



Herbaceous perennials are plants that grow and flower for three or more years. The stems and leaves of a perennial plant usually die to the ground each winter and re-grow in the spring. Requiring relatively low maintenance and available in countless shapes, sizes, and colors, perennials have proven themselves indispensable in home gardens.

### Choosing Perennials for Your Garden

Perennials come in a diverse array of colors, habits, and textures, and it is easy to find plants with cultural requirements to fit any garden landscape. When planning your garden, use your area's climate and your garden's light and soil conditions to guide your choice of perennials. Plants whose cultural requirements are naturally met by their landscape will have increased resistance to disease and pests and require less labor and resources to maintain.

### Recommended Perennials

The following list contains perennials that Longwood staff have nominated as having outstanding ornamental value.

Botanical Name	Common Names	Requirements*	Characteristics
<i>Cephalaria gigantea</i>	Tatarian cephalaria, Giant scabious	Zones: 3 - 7 Full sun, medium moisture, well-drained soil	6'-tall stems with pale yellow, pincushion flowers in late spring; self-sowing
<i>Dianthus gratianopolitanus</i> 'Bath's Pink'	Pink	Zones: 3 - 8 Full sun, medium moisture, well-drained soil	Evergreen bluish-green foliage with pink flowers in spring
<i>Geranium phaeum</i> 'Samobor'	Mourning widow, Dusky cranesbill	Zones: 5 - 7 Partial shade to full shade, medium moisture, well-drained soil	Dark purple flowers, and green foliage with maroon markings
<i>Hakonechloa macra</i> 'Aureola'	Hakone grass, Japanese forest grass	Zones: 6 - 9 Partial shade to full shade, medium to moist soil	Green and yellow variegated ornamental grass
<i>Helleborus foetidus</i>	Setterwort, Bearsfoot hellebore	Zones: 4 - 9 Partial shade to full shade, medium moisture, well-drained soil	Dark green evergreen foliage with pale green flowers from late winter into spring; self-sowing
<i>Iris</i> 'Harvest of Memories'	Tall bearded iris	Zones: 3 - 10 Full sun, medium moisture, well-drained soil	Pale yellow, fragrant flowers that bloom in both spring and fall

<i>Lysimachia nummularia</i> 'Aurea'	Gold moneywort, Golden creeping Jenny	Zones: 3 - 8 Full sun to partial shade, medium to moist soil	Creeping groundcover with bright yellow foliage
<i>Polygonatum odoratum</i> 'Variegatum'	Solomon's seal	Zones: 4 - 8 Partial shade to full shade, medium moisture, well- drained soil	White and green variegated foliage with tiny, fragrant, bell-shaped white flowers
<i>Thalictrum rochebrunianum</i>	Lavender mist Meadow rue	Zones: 4 - 7 Full sun to partial shade, medium moisture, well- drained soil	4'-6' bluish-green stems, topped with lavender-pink flowers in late summer.
<i>Viola labradorica</i>	Labrador violet, Alpine violet	Zones: 3 - 8 Full sun to partial shade, medium moisture, well- drained soil	Purple foliage throughout the growing season, complemented by lavender flowers in the spring; self- sowing

*\*Zone refers to USDA Hardiness Zone, based on average minimum winter temperatures. For more information, go to <http://www.usna.usda.gov/Hardzone/index.html>.*

## Perennial Care Tips

Perennials are often considered “low maintenance” since they can be planted once and enjoyed for many years. However, there are some basic maintenance practices that are important for the long-term health of perennial plants.

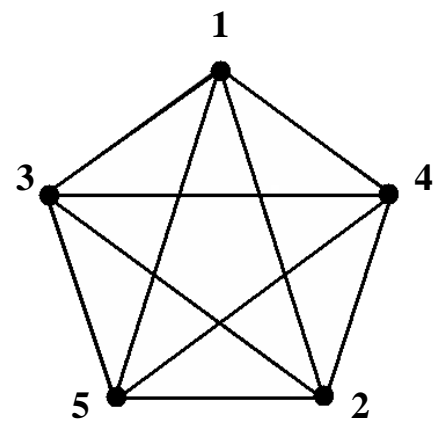
**FERTILIZING, MULCHING, and WEEDING.** Most perennials can be fertilized once a year in the spring with a store-bought fertilizer (1-2-1 or 5-10-5 nutrient ratio), manure, or compost. Mulching with 2"-3" of organic material such as compost or leaves will limit weed growth and retain moisture. Routine weeding will rid the garden of undesirable plants that compete with perennials for light, water, and nutrients.

**DEADHEADING.** Deadheading, or removing old flowers, encourages a plant to put its energy into producing additional flowers instead of producing seeds. Deadheading also improves the appearance of many plants. The seed pods and foliage of some plants, however, can add interest to the garden if left through the fall and winter. These plants can be cut back early the following spring before new growth begins. Experiment with your perennials to see which plants have interesting winter features.

**STAKING.** Some tall perennials tend to fall over during the summer. Unobtrusive staking can help keep them upright. The most common form of staking involves plunging five or more stakes around the plant. Then, as shown by the diagram below, string is tied into a star shape by going from stake 1 to stakes 2, 3, 4, and then 5. This provides extra support for the center of the plant. It is important to stake the plant before it begins to fall over, so the plant will grow to hide the stakes while being supported by them.

Another type of staking is called pea staking, which is an old method that is still common in Europe. Small twiggy branches are inserted in the ground around young plants which will need support later in the season. As the plants grow, they cover and hide the twiggy supports.

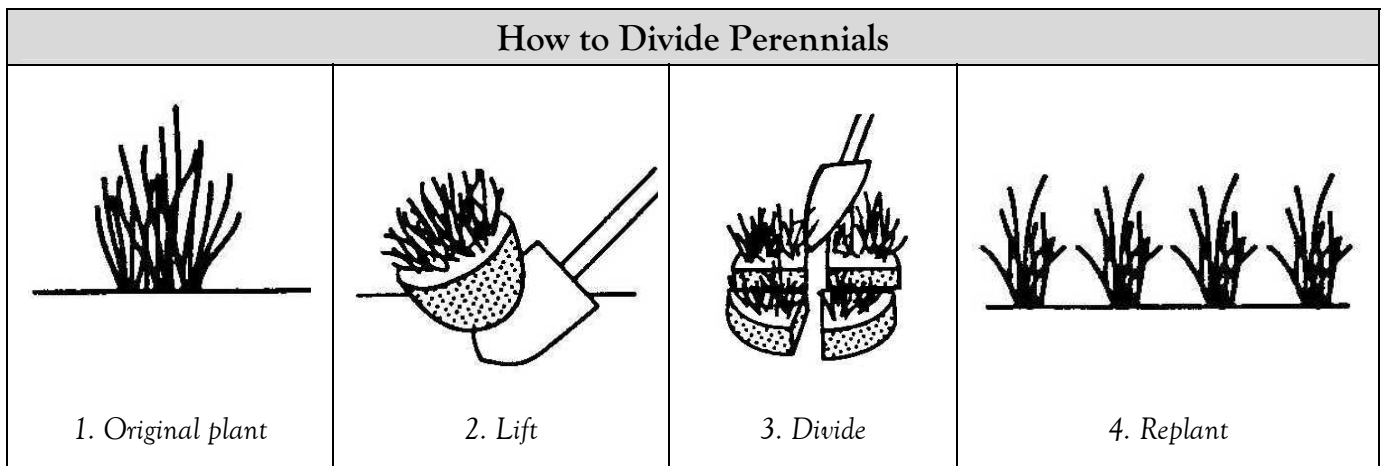
A third option is to plant tall perennials near something they can lean on for support, such as a fence, a shrub, or another perennial. This technique lends the garden a more informal look.



*Five stake method*

**PLANT DIVISION.** While some perennials will thrive for decades without being disturbed, most perennials benefit from being lifted and divided every few years. A plant needs to be divided if it begins to die out in the center, flowering has decreased, or the plant has grown too large for its space.

In the spring for fall-bloomers, or the in fall for spring-bloomers, lift the plant out of the ground with a spading fork or shovel, and break the clump into several pieces using your hands, a sharp knife, or a spade. The number and size of the division depends on the size of the original plant and the number and size of new plants you want. Discard the parts of the clump that are old or diseased. Replant the divisions and remember to keep them well-watered until the plants become reestablished.



### Longwood's Perennial Garden

Longwood's Perennial Garden exhibits a living catalog of perennials available for use in home gardens. Visit the extensive display to view how perennials can be used for various purposes in a range of settings. Categories of perennials found in the Idea Garden include:

- ☞ Perennials for Shade
- ☞ Native Perennials
- ☞ Whites and Silvers
- ☞ Drought-Tolerant Perennials
- ☞ New or Under-Used Perennials
- ☞ Old-Fashioned Perennials
- ☞ Perennials for Cut Flowers
- ☞ Cool Colors
- ☞ Perennials with Attractive Foliage
- ☞ Fragrant Perennials
- ☞ Warm Colors
- ☞ Multi-Season Perennials
- ☞ Butterfly & Hummingbird Perennials