

LOOKING AFTER YOUR PERENNIALS

- Water your plants regularly in the first year so they don't dry out. It's better to give a good soaking periodically rather than watering little and often. Avoid watering in the heat of the day.
- With taller varieties, it may be necessary to provide support with canes or plant supports, or you could save money by using twigs and branches cut specially for the job in winter. Attach the plant with plant ties or string, tied loosely in a figure-of-eight. For taller varieties, use strips cut from an old pair of tights.
- Snip off dead flowerheads at regular intervals to promote further flowering. When dead-heading plants with long stems, cut each stem back to the next growth point or set of leaves.
- Most perennials die back in winter, but some retain many of their leaves. Remove dead leaves before new growth starts in spring.
- Every spring, sprinkle the soil with a general fertiliser such as bonemeal.
- If your plants get too big, you can dig up the root clump (below) in early spring. Divide it into fist-sized sections, discarding any old woody parts. Dig over the soil, add compost and a general fertiliser and return one division to the original planting position. Then use the extra to expand the planting or start a new border.



FLOWER ARRANGING

The blooms of many summer-flowering perennial plants are ideal for flower arranging but if you want to use a lot of cut flowers, it may be worth growing a perennial 'picking' bed or border to avoid cutting flowers from your main garden displays.



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Fork
- Spade
- Hoe
- Watering can or hose
- Planting compost or well-rotted manure
- Bonemeal (if planting in autumn or winter)
- Growmore (if planting in spring or summer)
- Plant supports (canes)
- Perennial plants

For more information:
www.rhs.org.uk/advice
www.plantforlife.info

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THE EASY GUIDE TO GROWING PERENNIALS



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Perennials

FLOWERING PERENNIALS

Do you like the idea of flowering plants that come back year after year? Plants such as Oriental poppies, cranesbills, hostas and peonies are all referred to as 'herbaceous perennials' - plants that die back in autumn and grow again the following year. Whether you choose to plant your beds and borders entirely with the many types available or mix them with bedding plants, shrubs and bulbs, they create real colour, depth and variety, easily and quickly, and they won't cost the earth. But before buying and planting your herbaceous perennials, you might like to draw up a plan - you can then use some of the easily grown plants of different heights and flowering times to create real interest in your garden.



CHOOSING YOUR PLANTS

WHICH PLANTS TO BUY

Most herbaceous perennials are available all year round, usually in spring as small plants and in summer as larger plants, which are often in flower and useful for providing instant colour. Most species can be planted at any time of year. For maximum impact, buy a number of the same plants to be used in groups of three or five.

To be sure that plants you have chosen grow well in your type of soil, refer to the plant label or ask at your garden centre or nursery. When choosing a container-grown perennial, check the top growth is green and healthy, and that the crown (the stems near the soil) is sturdy, with new shoots. Avoid plants with moss or weeds on the compost surface or those that have wilted.

To help you locate plants easily at your garden centre or nursery, in the list of plants opposite, the Latin names have been given first followed by the common name:

Recommended

RECOMMENDED PLANTS



DELPHINIUM



DIANTHUS

Species	Flowers	Colours	Height
<i>Anemone x hybrida</i> (Japanese anemone)	Aug-Oct	white, pink, red	60-90cm
<i>Aquilegia</i> (columbine)	Apr-May	wide range of colours	15-90cm
<i>Aster novae-angliae</i> (Michaelmas daisy)	Sept/Oct	red, pink, mauve, white	30-90cm
<i>Bergenia</i> (elephant's ears)	Mar-Apr	white, pink or red flowers good autumn foliage	23-45cm
<i>Campanula lactiflora</i> (bellflower)	Jun-Jul	pink or lavender blue	60-90cm
<i>Coreopsis</i> (tickseed)	Jun-Jul	yellow, daisy-like flowers	30-60cm
<i>Delphinium</i>	Jun-Jul	blue, purple, pink, white	60-90cm
<i>Dianthus</i> (pinks)	Jun-Jul	white, pink, red, salmon, mauve; often patterned	8-60cm
<i>Dicentra spectabilis</i> (bleeding heart)	June	rosy pink and white	90cm
<i>Digitalis</i> (foxglove)	Jun-Jul	purple, pink, white, lemon	70cm-1.5m
<i>Euphorbia</i> (spurge)	Apr-Jul	acid-yellow, red, orange	60cm-1m
<i>Geranium</i> (cranesbill)	May-Jun	white, pink, blue, purple	15cm-1.4m
<i>Hemerocallis</i> (day lily)	Apr-Aug	white, gold, orange, red	25cm-1.2m
<i>Hosta</i> (plantain lily)	Jun-Jul	variety of foliage colours white to purple flowers	15-90cm
<i>Kniphofia</i> (red-hot poker)	May-Aug	red, orange, yellow, white	50cm-2m
<i>Lupinus</i> (lupin)	summer	many shades	60-90cm
<i>Paeonia</i> (peony)	May	white, yellow, pink, red	45cm-1m
<i>Papaver orientalis</i> (Oriental poppy)	May-Jun	white, pink, red, orange	45-90cm
<i>Phlox paniculata</i>	Jun-Jul	white, blue, pink, red	90cm-1.2m
<i>Primula</i>	Mar-May	all shades	10-60cm



LUPINUS



PAEONIA



Planting

PLANTING

PREPARATION & PLANTING TIME: 10 MINUTES PER PLANT

- Do not plant when the soil is excessively dry, waterlogged or frozen.
- For healthy herbaceous perennials, good soil preparation is essential. Dig to a depth of 25cm, then add organic material such as general-purpose compost, mushroom compost or well-rotted farmyard manure and a general-purpose fertiliser such as bonemeal, all available from your garden centre or nursery.
- Before planting, stand your plants in their pots in a bowl of water so that the compost is wet through.
- Dig a hole about twice the size of the pot and fork over the bottom. Place the plant in the hole to check it's big enough.
- Remove any weeds from the pot to stop them spreading, then tap the plant out of its pot and tease out any congested roots.
- Place it in the hole, ensuring that the top of the roots are just below soil level.
- Fill in the surrounding hole and firm down the soil with your foot. Sprinkle a handful of bonemeal around the plant.
- Space your plants so that they will almost touch when fully grown to minimise weeding.
- Spreading compost, cocoa shells, bark or gravel over the soil around the plants will help to keep roots and soil moist, and prevent weed growth.
- Water well and keep watering for the next few weeks. If planting in a dry spot, make a slight depression around the plant to ensure water soaks into the soil.

