

# HOME & GARDEN

## Tips for planting a successful garden

Herbaceous perennials have crowns that can live below the ground from year to year; the stems usually die back to the ground over winter. Several woody plants are often included as perennials, as are plants that remain evergreen below the snow cover—it can be a bit confusing to the novice, but don't despair. Perennials are worth the effort! They are among the most beautiful plants available today.

### SITE

The key to success with perennial gardening lies in understanding your site and choosing plants that will adapt to the conditions your garden offers. The largest range of perennials prefers a sunny situation (at least half a day of direct sunlight) with well drained, humus rich soil. However, there are perennials for clay, sand, wet or dry soils as well as shady, moist woodland conditions.

### PREPARING THE SOIL

Considering the investment of both time and cash required when planning a new garden, careful preparation of the planting bed is essential. You wouldn't paint your new car without sanding, filling and making sure the surface is just about perfect before spraying the paint. The same holds true for

the garden. Any effort spent preparing the beds will be rewarded with luxurious results.

Poor drainage will encourage root diseases. Hardpan clay will prevent the efficient drainage of water. Just because the land slopes, do not assume it has good drainage. Sandy soils may drain too quickly to hold nourishment for the plants.

Turn the soil, digging deeply, incorporating organic material such as compost and well-rotted manure. Organic material will help retain moisture in sandy soils and surprisingly, it will help to break up heavy, clay soils. Ensure perennial weeds are thoroughly removed.

### WHAT ABOUT SIZE?

Size does count! A skimpy border a foot or two wide is doomed to disappoint you. The garden will appear insignificant. Plan a border of at least three feet (one metre) of depth, not including any shrubs that may be grown as a screen behind the perennials. A significant island bed will be more enjoyable than a string of narrow, ribbon beds along the edge of the property.

A generous bed allows space for groupings of similar plants (these are more effective, particularly when seen from a dis-

tance). Amend and till the soil as recommended and provide a trimmed edge to prevent the encroachment of roots from the surrounding lawn.

### PLANNING

Once the site has been chosen and prepared, you can start planning the layout of your plants. A backbone of shrubs will help to extend the season of interest as well as providing wind protection for your garden.

With a simple outline on paper, fill in sections of the garden around the shrub backbone to provide interest from spring until fall. Do not place all of the plants that bloom together (such as all the spring bloomers) in one section, rather space them so that the garden will appear full and interesting through several seasons.

Use three sheets of tracing paper (one each for spring, summer and fall) to layer the planting schemes. Draw in the spring plants, well spaced throughout the border; next add summer interest plants; finally introduce fall bloomers. using the tracing paper layers for each season, over one template of the garden will save you from re-draw-

ing the garden as the plan evolves. This need not be a detailed drawing—keep the elements simple!

### MULCHING

Assume that the garden will take at least two or three seasons to reach its full potential. This means that there will be some gaps between the plants for the first year. A mulch of shredded bark, woodchips or other suitable material will help to keep the weeds at bay and retain valuable moisture. Even drought resistant plants need consistent monitoring for irrigation requirements as they establish in their first season.

Happily situated perennials will thrive for many years to come, making all of the planning and preparation worthwhile. Enjoy your border!

Information courtesy the garden Centre Commodity Group of Landscape Ontario Horticultural Trades Association and your neighbourhood garden centre TAYLOR NURSERY.

## Sod laying tips from Halton Sod

1. Your sod should be laid on bare soil. This can be achieved one of four ways:

- Rototill, rake debris, level surface, lay sod
- Use Round-up on a thin lawn. When the green is killed, just rake the area and lay your sod.
- Rent a small sod harvester and remove the old turf to make way for the new sod.
- Set your mower very low to the ground. Mow and rake off debris. Put down a thin, good quality layer of top soil before sodding.

2. Carefully level all surfaces to be sodded. Soil surface should be 1" below walks, patios and driveways, to accommodate sod thickness.

3. Begin laying sod as soon as possible, especially in the spring (May, June) to avoid damage from heating. Sod that will remain stacked on a pallet for an extended period of time must be unstacked to allow air circulation. Lay the first strip of sod along a straight line (use a string for a guide in irregular areas). Butt joints tightly; do not overlap edges. Then laying second strip, stagger joints, much like laying bricks. Use a sharp knife to cut sod to fit curves, edges, sprinklers heads, etc. DO NOT OVERLAP.

4. WATER, WATER, WATER! If a large area is being sodded, do not wait until the entire area is laid before watering. As

soon as a sprinkler-sized area is laid begin watering it. Then go on to the next section. On a hot day, do not leave laid sod for more than one hour without water. On a cooler, overcast day, do not leave it more than 2 hours.

5. Roll your new lawn to even out turf joints and to ensure good contact between turf roots and the soil. Watering is effective in eliminating air pockets.

6. Keep your new sod well watered for at least two to three weeks. This will assist the turf edges to knit and the roots to become established.

## Your watering and mowing guide

### WATER GAUGE TIP

- To gauge watering, simply place an empty straight edge can about 6' away from the sprinkler.
- When there is an inch of water in the can, it's time to move the sprinkler to the next area.

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