

# HANSON'S GUIDE TO PLANTING PERENNIALS

## **Soil Preparation:**

A plant's health is dependent on the right conditions for that particular plant. Perennials, being a diverse group, have many different requirements. Some are more adaptable than others. Some have very specific requirements. In our catalog, we've tried to point out those with specific requirements. But as a general rule, the better the soil you have, the healthier your plant will be. For most plants, the garden area should be dug to a depth of 12-18", 1/4 of which should be organic soil amendments such as peat moss or any good composted materials. A soil test will give recommendations for lime and fertilizer. We recommend a good controlled release fertilizer such as Osmocote applied once in the spring when your plants are beginning to grow. Add 3" of organic material each year.

## **Watering and Planting:**

If possible, plant the same day you take your plants home. If not, water thoroughly and place in a shady location. Keep moist until you are able to plant. The least stress will occur if you are able to plant in the evening or on a cloudy day. To plant, remove from the pot and set the plant at soil level in the ground. Firm the soil around the plant and water thoroughly. While the plant is becoming established, be attentive to watering. Once established, watering will depend on the type of plant, soil and light conditions, and the amount of rainfall. Some plants are more drought tolerant than others. Be sure to refer to the culture tag for specific requirements.

## **Mulching:**

While your plants are small, a 3" mulch of shredded cedar will conserve moisture and hold down weeds. (Do not mulch close to the stems of bearded iris or peonies!) Once mature a plant will have less need for a mulch since it will shade the soil, discouraging weeds and allowing less evaporation of water. Winter mulch is an entirely different story. We will say first that we do not mulch in the winter, preferring to give our plants the true test of Wisconsin winters. We have been pleasantly surprised at the good survival rate. However, if you are faint of heart or have some special plants that are somewhat less than hardy or if you have planted late in fall, use an airy mulch such as evergreen boughs. Wait until the ground has frozen (usually late October or early November) as the object is to keep it that way rather than to allow any alternate freezing and thawing. Remove this mulch in April (depending on weather) before the plant breaks dormancy.

## **Transplanting and Dividing:**

Yes, there is work for you even after your perennials are established. Some plants are short-lived (these are usually the ones that are so beautiful that you cannot live without them!). Some plants live for generations; some plants need transplanting and dividing after a few years. The rule of thumb is: Do spring-blooming plants in late summer and fall-blooming plants in the spring or divide or transplant after bloom. It is usually best to cut the foliage back when transplanting or dividing so that the plant's energy can be directed to the roots.

## **Weeds:**

Begin with a weed-free bed and then keep a keen eye open for any weeds that pop up the first two years. As a result, your weeding will be greatly minimized. As your plants fill in, they will shade out many weeds.