

# A GUIDE TO PLANT AND SOUL CARE

## I. Know what you have.

Annual flowers complete their growing cycle in one season and need to be replanted each year. But perennials return year after year getting bigger and better as they do and, in most instances, can be divided every few years to share with friends or create new beds or borders.

Perennials range in height from under an inch to over twelve feet and span the entire spectrum of colors. Some perennials make excellent ground covers, doing well even in dry shade, while others will actually grow in standing water.

As a general rule perennials do not reach full maturity for several seasons (a good reason to buy mature plants and get them in early). And while some of them are clump formers, expanding slowly, others are robust spreaders (to the point of being invasive), quickly filling gaps in the landscape. Some come true from seed reliably while others are vegetatively propagated from a single hybrid parent plant with which they are genetically identical.

Remember you also have something very important within you that is an annual in one sense and a perennial in another. It is called your soul. It resembles the annual in that you only get one life, 'It is appointed for a man once to die then the judgment' *Hebrews 9:27* However, your soul is eternal, you will always have existence just as the perennial continues to return 'these will go away into eternal punishment, but these to eternal life.' *Matthew 25:46* Your soul needs spiritual life and that begins with Jesus Christ, 'He who has the Son has life, but he who does not have the son does not have life.' *1 John 5:12*



## II. Know where you are.

Thinking about adding perennials to your landscape? Following these three steps will help to ensure your success:

- 1) **Know** your site: Wet or Dry, Shaded or Sunny, Sheltered or Exposed? Select your plants accordingly or plan to alter your site.

May we suggest taking care of your soul. Proverbs 19:8: 'He who gains wisdom loves his own soul.' Do you love your soul?

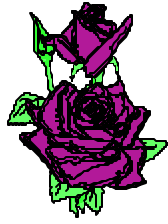
- 2) **Prepare** your site: Site preparation is to perennial gardening what a foundation is to a house. Though perennials are very adaptable plants, they are also long-lived and benefit from the following procedures:

- Remove existing sod or weeds to eliminate unwanted competition. Use Ornamec to kill annual and perennial grasses. It is very effective when used as directed and will not harm your perennials.

May we suggest removing the weed of unbelief from your soul. Hebrews 11:6 tells us that 'without faith is impossible to please the Lord.' The sin of unbelief is the only unpardonable sin. Jesus said 'all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, but whoever blasphemes the Holy Spirit will never know forgiveness.' *Mark 3:29*

- Make sure the soil is loosened to a depth of at least one-foot (this will allow your plants to become well rooted).

Some soil can be hard and root infested, work hard at it, you will be richly rewarded. Souls can be a tough place to work, but keep at it, Romans 10:11 tells us 'He who believes in Me will not be disappointed.'



- Generously amend poor clay or sandy soils with as much organic matter as you can lay your hands on (leafmold, compost, well-rotted manure, etc.). Spread it on six inches deep and till it in. This will provide your plants with the kind of environment they will thrive in.

Help your soul grow in faith by being in contact with He who made your soul. Romans 10:17 says, 'Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God,' – the Word of God being the Bible.

- 3) **Plan** your site: Which plants will you choose and how will you use them? Be sure to pay attention to such things as height, spread, color, and bloom-time when planning your site!

To avoid the quick death of your plants and disappointments about your labors one should always seek counsel from those who know plants. To avoid disappointment in this life and the spiritual death of the soul seek counsel from the one who made life, Jesus. He said in John 10:10 'I have come to give life and to give in to the full.' Colossians 1:16 states, 'all things have been created by Him and for Him.'

### III. Know how to make it grow.

If you are starting or adding to a perennial garden, several critical details need to be addressed at planting time:

- 1) Container-grown perennials benefit from being transplanted into larger containers several times during the early stages of growth. At some point, however, it becomes impractical for growers to continue this process and plant roots become pot-bound.



The rootballs of such plants need to be "awakened" by removing the rootplug at the base of the plant and scuffing up the sides of the rootball with your fingernails or a fork (show no mercy!). Doing so will end the roots' going-about-in-circles behavior, forcing them to send out new roots once planted and thus enabling them to get a good purchase in their new surroundings. Failure to do this will in most cases result in poor performance or early death.

If such plants exhibit extensive top growth at planting time, prune them back by one-third to one-half to reduce transplant shock. The plants will recover completely within two or three weeks of being settled in their new home and will reward you for your trouble.

There are other things that can hinder soul growth. Jesus told us that 'every branch that bears fruit He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit.' *John 15:2* Sometimes removal of things in our lives is needed in order for us to see correctly.

- 2) Make sure the soil-line in the pot matches the soil-line in your garden: buried stems and exposed roots are a no-no.

Planting and caring for perennials is easy, and following a few simple guidelines will help guarantee your success:

- Soil should be packed firmly around plants to remove air pockets and provide good soil contact with the roots.
- When possible, choose cloudy days to plant or plant late in the afternoon to reduce stress to your plants.
- Gardeners more than any other class of people (lovers, perhaps, excepted) are prone to spring fever. While it's okay to buy plants early (you are more likely to get what you want that way), resist the temptation to plant them much before the end of May unless you can protect them from frost.
- Thoroughly water in your plants once you have finished planting to get them off to a good start. But be judicious in watering established plants: too much is often worse than not enough. Plants need about one inch of water a week. Occasional deep waterings are better than frequent shallow ones, which encourage root development near the surface.
- Try to complete your watering before mid-day to allow foliage to dry out; avoid watering on cloudy days when possible.
- With normal rainfall, established plants should need little watering in most cases. Place a coffee can in the midst of your plants to determine the amount of water your plants are receiving if in doubt.

Your soul needs to be given that which it needs to flourish. Since your soul is not a physical thing, it needs spiritual watering. Psalm 1 reminds us that 'his delight is in the word of God...he will be like a tree firmly planted by the streams of water, which yields its fruit in due season.'

#### IV. Know how to care.

Removing spent blossoms from perennials frequently encourages a second, though usually inferior, flowering. And some perennials will bloom for many weeks (some for months) while others finish their bloom in two or three weeks, so it's good to mix plants with differing seasons of bloom to keep the show lively from May to October.

Many different types of people make up the church. We all do not look alike, and some further along in the journey of the soul, but that is the beauty of the place. Jesus told us that when he said 'they hear the word and accept it, and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and hundred fold.' The church is kind of like God's Garden.

Some perennials, like peonies, dictamnus, and baptisia do not like being disturbed, but others can be dug and moved about during



most of the growing season with impunity. If only a portion of the root mass can be dug with the plant, remove all the flowers and one-third of the foliage at the time of digging. Choose a cloudy day if possible and water in well once you have replanted.



When the soul gets moved about and pulled apart by the pains of this world you certainly need refreshment. Jesus said, 'Come to me all you that are weary and burdened down, and I will give you rest.' *Matthew 11:28*

Some plants (such as delphiniums and golden glow helianthus) will need to be staked. Use green bamboo or similar low-profile materials. Tomato hoops work well with plants like peonies which tend to get a little floppy without support. In some cases adjacent plants can be a means of supporting top-heavy specimens. Mass planting of problem plants is also effective in keeping them upright.

Many flowers are suitable for cutting. Such information can be found in most books dealing with perennials. Try to do your cutting early morning or late afternoon or during cloudy weather. Take a pitcher or bucket of warm water with you so you can immerse cut stems immediately. Leave stems on the long side so your arrangement options won't be limited. Refrigerating immediately for several hours before arranging will keep your cut flowers looking good for a long time.

In the case of lilies, cutting the flowers will not injure the bulbs, but the following year's blooms may be compromised. Perennials, like annuals, are subject to a wide range of diseases and insect infestations. Making sure that your plants' requirements for soil, water, sun, nutrients, and growing space are met is the best offense. Healthy plants run the lowest risk. Many organic pesticides are available which are effective when used as recommended. Early detection and treatment is always the best course of action. Be sure to destroy (burning is preferable) diseased foliage and stems.

When your garden is growing and looks great you can sit back and enjoy. When your soul has found itself secured in Jesus Christ, you can sit back and enjoy the journey to heaven. Jesus promised 'I will be with you even to the end of the age' and 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' *Matthew 28:20, Hebrews 13:5*

For more information on growing perennials, go to <http://www.shilohnh.com/PerennialConcerns.html> on the web.

For care of your soul, we invite you to drop by:

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