

PLANT CARE AND MAINTENANCE GUIDELINES

In order to keep your new landscape looking healthy and attractive, as well as to keep the following warranty period in effect, proper care and maintenance guidelines must be observed.

By following these simple guidelines, your landscape will become a source of beauty and lasting enjoyment. Remember Trent Companies can help you create the ultimate in outdoor living environments.

TREES AND SHRUBS

watering

Receiving an appropriate level of moisture is the most important factor for the proper establishment of newly installed plant material. Plants are equally sensitive to both over watering and under watering. Suitable watering of plants includes maintaining the correct amount of moisture and using the proper method of application.

For the first two to three weeks after installation, plants should be soaked two to three times per week. After three weeks, plants should receive approximately one inch of water per week in one application, or more when temperatures exceed 85 degrees Fahrenheit. Plants benefit most from a thorough soaking at the soil line, rather than sprinkling the leaves or mulch bed. Recommended watering times are in the early morning or late evening hours. Be careful not to over water. More plants die from sitting in standing water, than from not receiving enough moisture.

fertilizing

Most plant materials benefit from the periodic application of fertilizer nutrients during the growing season. A granular-type fertilizer, such as 12-12-12, may be applied to the soil line of trees and shrubs each spring. Acid-loving plants, such as azaleas, rhododendrons, yews, and ilex will green up with a soil application of granular aluminum sulfate each spring and fall of the year.

Keep your shrubs and flowers blooming longer by applying a foliar-spray of a general fertilizer (Peters, Miracle-Gro, Miracid) every two to three weeks. In this case, cover the leaves of the plant, as well as, the soil line with the fertilizer spray.

For every fertilizer, always read the manufacturer's label before application. Over-application can burn the plant material.

pruning

Keep your established plants looking full and attractive by pruning away dead branches, or removing spent flower heads this will encourage new growth and compactness. Most trees and shrubs should be pruned in the month of June, or after they have finished flowering. Remember to make all pruning cuts immediately above a growth bud on the branch, and not in the middle of the stem. Shearing is not recommended if you want to keep the natural form of the plant.

PERENNIALS

Perennials are among the most useful plants for the home landscape. They are colorful and diverse, and can be used as more or less permanent features. While trees and shrubs provide the outline shape and sometimes the backdrop of the landscape, non-woody perennials can provide more detail and accents.

Herbaceous plants grow at their best in well-cultivated, fertile, moist but well-drained soil that neither remains wet throughout the winter nor becomes too dry in the summer.

preparation of soil

Soil preparation for perennials is best begun ahead of planting time. An early start means that unwanted grass and broad-leaved weeds can be eradicated. Large clumps can be removed by hand during digging, or they can be tilled under: perennial grasses should be removed and destroyed or composted. Fresh weed seedlings, often from seed brought to the surface during soil preparation, are easily killed by hoeing or cultivating in the days and weeks after soil has been prepared.

Incorporating organic matter, such as well-rotted manure, peat moss, compost, or leaf mold improves clay soils by increasing the soil pore space and thus increasing aeration and drainage capabilities. A quick-draining soil is also improved with the addition of organic matter, which increases the soil's ability to retain water and nutrients. Organic matter should be dug into the soil on a yearly basis, either before the perennials are planted or, around the plants during the spring clean-up. The soil should be turned and organic matter incorporated in an established perennial bed carefully so that plants are not disturbed.

planting

Set out the individual plants in their containers on or near their planting positions. Then, handling the plants one at a time so roots have the least exposure to the drying air, plant. Dig holes big enough for the root systems and with one hand hold each plant in its hole so that the junction of roots and stem(s) or crown will be at or slightly below the soil surface. With the other hand, tumble loose soil around roots and other underground parts. Gently firm the soil over or around smaller perennials; larger plants should be tamped or firmed in more securely. Water each newly planted perennial so soil and roots settle in together; in dry conditions, plants are best puddle in with plenty of water, so that surrounding soil is moistened.

maintenance

Gardening with perennial and annual plants should be a pleasurable and rewarding experience. To maintain herbaceous plants we need to spend time watering, staking, deadheading, pinching, fertilizing, mulching, hoeing, digging, and preparing for the changes in season.

Watering is necessary whenever we plant something new, when the soil is too dry and plants are stressed, or when we have received plants from a nursery or garden center and must leave them in their containers until we are ready to plant them. The one important rule for watering is to give the plants a thorough soaking where it matters, at the roots.

watering and fertilizing

The need to water perennials varies from place to place as well as from month to month. Fertilization for perennials is usually needed once or twice during the growing season. Make one early summer application of a granular 5-10-5 formulation at a lighter application rate than during soil preparation (2 pounds per 100 square feet), or one or two liquid fertilizer applications (use at half the recommended rate to avoid burning tender young shoots and overdosing with nitrogen which leads to excessive leafy growth).

For established perennial plantings, surface or liquid applications or an all-around garden fertilizer two or three times during the year will provide adequate amounts of plant food. One application should be in early spring while plants are still dormant, another six weeks into the growing season, and the third in mid- to late summer.

Foliar sprays of dilute liquid fertilizer will bring almost immediate though short-term results; for the best results when plants show signs of nutrient deficiencies, combine foliar feeding with soil applications. A regular fertilization program, though, should ensure healthy plant growth and development.

weed control

While perennials are small, it's an easy task to hand-weed or hoe lightly between the plants to prevent weeds from becoming established and from competing with the perennials for moisture and nutrients. As perennials grow and spread, weeds will be fewer. Remove those that do grow so the perennials can continue their unrestricted development. A mulch of shredded bark, applied to the bare and weed-free soil between perennials, will help not only with weed control but with moisture conservation.

mulches

Mulching with bark, peat moss, or other organic material will improve the air/water relationship in the soil. Most perennials perform better with an application of mulch, straw, leaves, or evergreen boughs in the fall. This will protect against winter damage.

staking/support

Taller-growing perennials may need support to prevent their flopping over. While the plants are still fairly short and before they start to fall, insert a support structure among the plant. Subsequent growth will cover the structure.

pests and diseases

Herbaceous perennials are susceptible to damage from insects and to fungal, bacterial, and viral diseases. The key to managing pests and diseases is to provide the plant with the best possible growing conditions.

division

Most herbaceous plants are easily divided during the dormant season by lifting them from the soil and, in case of large clumps or crowns, breaking them apart into several pieces, either by inserting two garden forks into the clump back to back, with the clump levered apart, or by gently separating the roots with hands or a trowel. Discard the older, central portions and plant the outer, newer parts.

Plants with fleshy roots, such as daylilies, can be divided by digging the plant out of the ground and cutting the roots with a knife or, in the case of a large plant, chopping it into sections with an ax. Be sure that each piece has two to six buds showing signs of upward growth before replanting. For most herbaceous perennials early spring and early autumn are the best times for division.

fall cleanup, winter

When top growth has died back, trim for neatness as desired, and clean out weeds before they become established. Fall is the best time to lift and divide spring and summer flowering perennials in all but the coldest climates. Otherwise, divide perennials in spring. Dead top growth may either be removed (necessary if it is likely to harbor fungus and insects) or left as a protective mulch for the underground parts during winter. If it is trimmed back to within a few inches of the ground, apply a winter mulch after the ground has frozen; this will protect against alternate thawing and freezing which tend to lift plants out of the soil. Remove any remaining tops and the winter mulch in very early spring.