

HOW TO PLANT DAYLILIES

Once you receive your bare-root daylilies, it is good to soak their roots in a bucket with a few inches of water in it for a couple of hours before planting. They can be held for several days this way until it is convenient to get them into the garden, but they are not water lilies and do not like to be left in standing water for a long time.

Location: Daylilies are sun lovers, so choose a spot where your daylilies will receive as much sun as possible. They will tolerate partial shade quite well but may not bloom as profusely. If planting them near or around trees, remember that they have much root competition for water and will need to receive extra. They like a well-drained soil but can handle a clay that has been amended with plenty of organic material. In a sandy soil, they are likely to have "bushier" roots with many small fibrous roots, but that is just fine.

Planting: Dig a hole that is wide enough to allow the roots of the plant to be spread out laterally and that is at least one foot deep. Then mix organic material (compost, decayed leaves, peat moss, etc.) into the soil just removed from the hole, and create a cone-shaped mound with the mixture down in the hole, the peak of which is just *slightly below* the surface of the surrounding ground. Some daylily growers like to mix a handful of fertilizer into the mound as well; a slow-release form is ideal for this. The crown of the plant--the whitish area at the base of the plant between the green leaves above and the roots below--should not be set deeper than one inch below the ground level. Place the daylily atop the mound with the roots spread out around all sides of the slopes of the mound. Push half of the remaining loose soil back into the hole, working it into and around the roots, then water the soil in the hole. Then push the remainder of the soil back into the hole, press it down lightly to remove trapped air, and water it again, leaving a slight depression around the plant. Cover the dug area with mulch, but keep it about an inch or so away from the base of the plant itself. Be sure to *label the plant* with a permanent marking tag! A daylily without a name loses much of its market value.

Spacing: Daylilies need room between plants and should be set out 18-24" apart minimally to give each room for multiplication and expansion. Extra space around them is a plus because it allows one to move around them in the garden with ease and without overly compacting the soil immediately around the plants by one's footfalls.

Watering: During the first few weeks after replanting, the daylily is busy creating new, fine feeder roots by which it can take up water and food from the soil. Keeping the soil moist though not sopping wet during this period is beneficial to feeder root production. Once the plant is established in place, you can let your new plant become part of your general watering regime. During the summer season, daylilies prefer a deep watering occasionally rather than a more frequent but shallow, surface sprinkling. This encourages the deeply set roots to grow.

Feeding: An application of fertilizer in the spring as the plant is emerging from winter slumber is very beneficial. Many gardeners will not bother reapplying any fertilizer again until late summer just after blooming ends and before their daylilies undergo a growth spurt to multiply fans ahead of the onset of the frosts. A generic garden fertilizer (10-10-10 or 12-12-12) is what many use though some opt to put on one with a higher nitrogen content (the first number in the sequence) because nitrogen stimulates leaf production and greening.

Dividing clumps: After three to five years in place, a daylily clump probably will have become large enough to require dividing. While they can be left undisturbed for longer to grow into huge clumps, it is healthier for the overall plant to be dug with a garden fork and split apart into several smaller clumps periodically. Besides, while a clump of 15 to 20 fans can put on a very impressive display, digging a clump that large becomes a herculean task! Smaller clumps are tidier and much easier to handle. Some daylilies grow so tightly nestled together that it takes a garden fork and/or a large sharp knife to cut them apart; other grow loosely connected, and their fans can be separated relatively easily with one's fingers clawing the plants apart. A long regular screwdriver seems to be very helpful as a prying tool. One doesn't have to be gentle in dividing daylilies! However, it is almost inevitable that a few fans will break off during the process. If those fans have both most of their crown area intact and a bit of root still firmly attached, the fans can be replanted and likely will survive the ordeal. In any case, when digging a clump, the ideal tool is a garden fork rather than a shovel because the fork tends to pry the plant from the soil whereas a shovel digs up the soil as well. Be sure to push the fork in deeply and pry slightly *all the way around the plant once* before attempting to apply heavy pressure from different sides as this will reduce root breakage and overall stress to the plant.