

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW DO I TELL THE TOP OF A BARE-ROOT PLANT FROM THE BOTTOM?

It's not always easy to tell which end of a bareroot perennial is up. In their dormant state, some plants—Ferns and *Liatris* are good examples—may lack obvious roots. Look for buds or the remains of stems and leaves, and plant them facing up. When in doubt, lay the crown on its side; the plant knows to send shoots up and roots down.

LEAVES OF MY NEWLY PLANTED PERENNIAL LOOK WILTED. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Check the soil around the plant with your finger to a depth of about 1in. If the soil is dry, water thoroughly. But if the soil below the surface is moist to the touch, don't water. The plant is probably wilting because the roots are unable to supply the top with sufficient moisture even though the soil is damp. The remedy is to provide temporary shade for the plant. Within a week or so, the roots should catch up, and you can remove the shading. Please note: Overwatering causes a plant's roots to rot and then its leaves to wilt because they are not receiving sufficient water.

WILL MY NEW PERENNIALS OR SHRUBS BLOOM THE FIRST YEAR?

Many plants grow slowly and bloom sparsely, if at all, for the first year or two after transplanting. Once their roots have become established, the plants take off with vigorous growth and abundant flowers. Your patience will be rewarded.

HOW SHOULD I CARE FOR TENDER BULBS OVER THE WINTER?

Please consult the cultural instructions that we sent with your spring order, or visit our Web site for cultural information.

WE'RE EXPECTING A FROST—HOW CAN I PROTECT MY NEW PLANTS?

If a heavy frost is imminent, cover the young growth with a light mulch of leaves or straw, or apply a floating rowcover. Remove this protection by midmorning of the following day.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF OVERWATERING?

If plants wilt when the soil is moist, they may be getting too much water; wait until the soil has dried 1in from the surface before watering. Overwatering can also cause leaves to turn yellow or black.

HOW DO I KNOW WHICH END OF A BULB TO PLANT FACING UP?

Many bulbs have a flat base (where the roots grow from) and a pointed top (where the stems and leaves arise from). Irregularly shaped bulbs are illustrated under the particular variety on pp7–12.

HOW AND WHEN DO I FERTILIZE MY BULBS?

You may use any slow-release fertilizer that's specifically formulated for bulbs. Scatter the fertilizer lightly over the top of the ground in fall after planting your bulbs and again in early spring just as growth starts to show through the ground.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF IT'S TOO WARM TO PLANT MY BULBS?

Bulbs may be stored at cool temperatures (35–45°F) in a dry and airy location for up to two weeks. They may be planted when the soil temperature at a depth of 6–8in is 60°F or cooler. This is usually about the time of the first frost, or when autumn leaves begin to fall.

HOW LATE CAN I PLANT PERENNIALS OR BULBS?

Perennials and most bulbs should be in the ground at least 6 weeks before the soil begins to freeze in your area. However, Tulips and Lilies can safely be planted until late December if the ground is still open.

WHEN SHOULD I CUT BACK OR PRUNE PERENNIALS AND SHRUBS?

Most herbaceous perennials can be cut back to the ground when their foliage has turned yellow or brown. Woody perennials such as Lavender and Perovskia should be pruned back in spring. Some perennials (Dianthus, Campanula) have clumps of basal foliage that should be allowed to remain through the winter. Unless indicated otherwise in the information on specific shrubs and vines (Hydrangea, Rosa, and Clematis, for example), they may be pruned immediately after they finish blooming.

LEAVES IN MY GARDEN HAVE A WHITE COATING ON THEM.

WHAT IT IS?

The leaves of certain plants (such as Phlox and Pulmonaria) are more susceptible to a fungus called powdery mildew, especially when soil conditions are dry. Water deeply during dry spells to reduce the incidence of disease, and dust with sulfur (available at garden centers) beginning in early summer. Thinning ½ the shoots of Phlox when 6in tall in spring also provides better air circulation and helps keep mildew at bay.

WHAT CAUSES BLACK SPOTS ON THE LEAVES OF MY ROSES?

Some Roses are prone to fungus in hot, humid areas. Cleaning up old foliage and cutting back affected canes is important for disease control. Spraying the leaves with Bordeaux mixture, a copper-based fungicide, can help once symptoms appear (follow the manufacturer's instructions).

HOW CAN I CONTROL SLUGS IN MY GARDEN?

Set out shallow bowls of beer (any inexpensive brand is effective) to catch and drown slugs and snails. Thin strips of copper seem to create an effective barrier when wrapped around the bottom of plant pots or formed into a collar on the ground around favorite plants. You might also try using diatomaceous earth (available at many garden centers) as a barrier or (in the South) mulch with Zoysia clippings.

LEAVES KEEP TURNING YELLOW ON MY HOUSEPLANT. WHAT'S WRONG?

Check among the leaves and stems to see if there are webs. If so, your plant has spider mites (which are not insects, but related to spiders). Use a plant spray that is specifically labeled for the control of these pests, such as BioNeem, and follow the manufacturer's directions. Try to increase the humidity around your plant as well, as spider mites thrive in dry conditions.

HOW CAN I KEEP DEER AND RABBITS AWAY FROM MY PLANTS?

The most permanent (and costliest) defense against deer is a fence that is 8ft high. To deter rabbits, install a fence that is 3ft above ground, with 12in buried below ground. Repellent sprays work with varying degrees of effectiveness. Try alternating 2 or 3 different types and apply them as often as recommended by the manufacturer.