

DIVIDING IRIS AND LILIES

If your iris and lilies did not do well this year, they may need to be divided. Late summer is the best time to divide them. Both iris and lilies become overcrowded after a few years. The result is smaller, less vigorous flowers. You can revitalize them and get better flowers next year by dividing and replanting them. Iris should be divided every 2-4 years, depending upon the variety.

To divide iris, dig under each root club and lift the entire clump from the soil. Shake off the soil. With a sharp knife, cut the rhizomes, making sure that each division has at least one growing point or fan of leaves, a few inches of healthy rhizome and a number of well developed roots. You will get more flowers next year **if** you divide the rhizomes into a few, larger pieces. Discard any roots that show signs of insect damage or disease.

Daylilies are another garden favorite that responds well to division. Many daylily growers divide daylilies “any time the shovel is sharp,” according to the old adage. However, the best time is post-bloom and before the soil becomes so cold that new roots won’t establish. September is a wonderful time for this job as well. If you trim back the foliage by half, lifting of the clump is easier. Large clumps can be cut with a sharp spade into pie-shaped wedges or if the clump is loose, just hosing off soil with a stream of water will allow individual plants to be dislodged from the clump.

Replant lilies and iris into sunny, well-drained locations. After planting, leave the soil bare until it freezes. Then apply a winter mulch to prevent the ground from heaving in the winter.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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