

Perennials: homing and care

Perennials will be there for a long time – you won't be working in new compost beneath them every year, so it's ideal to put it in now. But you can plant with just a trowel and a watering can.

Equipment – the ideal set

- Trowel and watering can or hose (essentials)
- Potting soil
- Compost
- Bone meal
- Mulch

Settling the plant in

1. Give the plant a really good watering before you start.
2. Make a hole that is wider and a little deeper than the pot. (When you're done, you want the plant to sit exactly at soil level.) Mix the soil you removed with some potting soil.
3. In the bottom of the hole, add a good layer of soil and compost. Throw in a handful of bone meal if you have it, or a slow-release fertilizer, and mix it all up. Water it well.
4. Unpot your plant and gently spread the roots out sideways. It's not a disaster if you break a root but try not to break thick roots.
 - If pot-bound (the roots go around and around the pot), make two vertical cuts near the bottom to stimulate new, outward-going root growth. Spread the roots out a bit. In this case, remove some or all flower buds and prune the plant back a bit – that restores the roots/shoots balance and the plant will settle in faster.
 - If the surface soil around the plant is a bit compacted or matted, loosen it up.
5. Test the fit – when you put the plant in the hole, will it sit at soil level? If not, take the plant out and add more potting soil to the hole.
 - If the plant needs staking, put the stake in now.
6. When the plant is sitting *just* above soil level, add the rest of the soil you removed, tamping it down firmly as you go. Tamping and watering will settle it down to soil level.
7. Add a little mulch over top – keeps moisture in, and helps deter weeds.
8. Water it well – you want it thoroughly moist at the roots.

Care

Add a little 5-10-5 fertilizer three or four times over the summer.

Remove spent blossoms.

Consider pinching to create a bushier plant, and pruning to shape the plant.

If you worry it might not survive the winter, wrap it in burlap.

There's good information about perennial care on the 'net; here is one link from [Cornell U.](#)