



Homes & Gardens

Town Tribune Weekly Guide To Fall Living

This One Fall Garden Task Will Give You Twice as Many Plants Next Year



Perennials are key to a beautiful, low-maintenance garden. With proper care, these plants regrow year after year, rewarding gardeners with colorful blooms and lush foliage with minimal time and effort. But that doesn't mean perennial flowers never need a little TLC.

Fall is one of the seasons when you can help your existing perennials thrive while creating even more plants. Here's what you need to know about division, and why September is a great time to tackle this garden task.

Tess Rensch is a lead native plant habitat expert at the National Wildlife Federation.

What Is Dividing Plants?

"As plants mature, they may become crowded and less vigorous. Dividing the plant separates it into smaller sections, each with its own roots and shoots, giving those sections a new area to develop and allowing the original plant to continue growing with renewed vigor," says Tess Rensch, a lead native plant habitat expert with the National Wildlife Federation.

If your perennials are crowded or less vigorous—and you haven't divided them in the last couple of years, or ever—it's a good idea to divide and replant them. Another sign that a perennial plant could be ready for division is that the center of the crown has died back.

"Division is a great way to give an established perennial a fresh start," Rensch says.

To divide your plants, dig up perennials, separate them into clumps with roots and stems still

attached, and replant them. After digging up plants with a spade or shovel, use your hands, a gardening fork, or even a sharp knife to separate the root ball into clumps, ensuring that each new clump has both a root system and several shoots.

Benefits of Dividing Plants:

Division benefits plants by giving them a fresh start. Crowded plants compete more for resources, and reduced airflow to foliage can contribute to plant diseases and pest issues.

"Division can help rejuvenate crowded plants and give them better access to space and resources," Rensch says. "If those divisions are native plants, they can expand habitat and provide more food and shelter for insects, birds, and other wildlife."

The great thing is that division doesn't just benefit your plants: it's also a form of propagation, which benefits you as a gardener, too. Dividing perennials is an easy, no-cost way to multiply your plants, which can be used to fill additional spaces in your garden.

If you're short on space for new plantings, you can share or trade divisions with friends and neighbors.

The plants that benefit from division typically grow in dense clumps. Skipping dividing for these species can result in weaker growth, fewer flowers, or a plant that's too large for its space. However, some perennials, particularly ones with long taproots like false indigo (Baptisia), don't do well with division and could

be harmed by digging up and replanting.

Why You Should Divide Plants in September

The best time to divide plants can vary based on the type in question, but the general rule of thumb is to divide in spring or fall.

"The weather is typically mild, and plants aren't putting all of their energy into flowering," Rensch says. "That gives newly divided plants time to establish new roots before dealing with the stress of summer heat or winter cold."

Fall division can begin in September as long as the weather isn't too hot in your region. If possible, avoid dividing plants on a hot, sunny day. Instead, wait until a cooler, overcast day to dig them up and replant.

It's even better to water plants the day before dividing and plan division to occur the day before a rainstorm to ensure they get plenty of water after replanting.

5 Common Plants That Should Be Divided:

- **Asters (Symphyotrichum):** These members of the daisy family benefit from dividing every one to three years in spring or fall.

- **Tickseed (Coreopsis):** This native perennial should be divided every one to three years in spring or early fall. However, you can make large-flowered tickseed (*Coreopsis grandiflora*) and lance-leaved coreopsis (*Coreopsis lanceolata*) live longer by dividing them every two to three years.

- **Goldenrod (Solidago):** Goldenrods only need to be divided every four to five years, and it can be done in spring or fall.

- **Coneflower (Echinacea):** Divide coneflowers in spring or early fall every four to five years. However, you'll likely see new plants before then, as coneflowers will reseed.

- **Black-eyed Susan (Rudbeckia):** Like goldenrod, black-eyed Susan should only be divided every four to five years in spring or fall. Separate clumps with a spade or pitchfork.



TOWN TRIBUNE'S KITCHEN CORNER

Pumpkin Baked Oatmeal

Ingredients:

- 1 cup canned pumpkin puree
- 1 cup unsweetened almond milk
- 2 large eggs
- ½ cup melted coconut oil, plus more for the pan
- ¼ cup brown sugar, plus 2 tablespoons for topping
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- 2½ cups whole rolled oats
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
- ¼ teaspoon sea salt
- ¾ cup chopped pecans, plus ¼ cup for topping
- Powdered Sugar Glaze (optional)
- ½ cup powdered sugar, sifted if lumpy
- ½ to 1 tablespoon unsweetened almond milk
- ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract

Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F and grease an 8x8-inch or similar baking dish.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the pumpkin puree, almond milk, eggs, coconut oil, brown sugar, and maple syrup.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together the oats, baking powder, pumpkin pie spice, and salt.
4. Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and mix until just combined. Fold in ¾ cup of the pecans.
5. Transfer the oat mixture to the prepared baking dish



and spread in an even layer. Top with the 2 tablespoons brown sugar. If you're not making the glaze, top with the remaining ¼ cup pecans too. If you are making the glaze, wait to add these until later.

6. Bake for 48 to 55 minutes, or until the middle is lightly set. Let cool in the pan for at least 15 minutes before serving.

7. Make the powdered sugar glaze, if using: In a medium bowl, stir together the powdered sugar, ½ tablespoon almond milk, and the vanilla. The glaze should have a thick drizzleable consistency. If needed, add more almond milk, 1 teaspoon at a time, to help the glaze come together.

8. Drizzle over the baked oatmeal and top with the remaining ¼ cup pecans. Slice and serve.

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