



**The Shady Hill Gardening Tips Series**  
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## Perennials

Perennials are plants that come back every year. However, just because a plant is a perennial, that does not mean it is hardy for our area. We in Southern New Hampshire are Zone 5b. So you want to be sure you choose your perennials with at least a Zone 5 hardiness. The lower the zone, the more cold-hardy the plant.

Perennials generally have a limited bloom time of anywhere between 4 to 6 weeks, and have different flowering times -- early spring (April/May), mid spring (May/June), Summer (July/August), or fall (August/September). The length of time a perennial is in flower can often be extended a few weeks by deadheading passed blossoms.

When planning a perennial garden, you want to take into consideration the size of the planting area, the amount of sunlight, the height and color of the plants, and when the plants will flower. You should try and choose plants with different bloom times so you will have constant flower over the entire season. Perennials can be dug up, split, and transplanted, so it will grow over time.

Some popular and very hardy sunny perennials for our area include

- Coneflower
- Black-Eyed Susan
- Shasta Daisy
- Day Lilies
- Liatrus

Some great shade perennials include

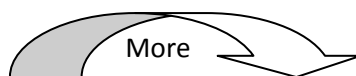
- Astilbe
- Hosta
- Columbine
- Heuchera



Black-Eyed Susan



Astilbe



When planting a perennial bed, you want to make sure the area is prepared ahead of time. You should make sure you have good soil and add any amendments, as needed, such as peat moss or other organic matter. There are many soils available today that have the top soil, compost, and peat moss already mixed in.

You'll want to plant your perennials in odd-numbered clumps, usually three or five, depending on the size of the bed. Dig your hole a bit bigger than the size of the root ball, remove the plant from the container, and plant it no deeper than the top of the existing soil line. Keep your perennials well watered until they are established.

Most perennials can be divided in early spring. You should dig out the entire plant, then use a sharp serrated knife or spade and split the plant into smaller ones. Some larger plants, like established grasses, may not be able to be dug up, and you can try using a spade or shovel to "slice" a section out. Keep in mind that when you start dividing, you will be taking a larger plant and making it into several smaller ones, so it might not be as "showy" as in previous years.

As far as fertilizing goes, perennials can be fertilized once in the spring, and again later in the summer if you are using a water soluble, drenching fertilizer. Or the other alternative is to use a slow release type that you scratch into the soil in early spring.