

KPOV – *The Point*
Gardening: Get Good at It
“Dividing Iris and Daylilies”
September 4, 2018

You planted iris and daylilies a few seasons ago, and with little help from you they have exploded into extraordinary beauty. But now the garden is crowded and its time to divide and conquer.

Late summer is a great time to divide iris and daylilies.

Crowded rhizomes of iris and daylilies reduce the number of flowers. Dividing them promotes growth, vigor, and optimum flower production. By dividing and replanting, they will have an opportunity to establish roots before winter.

For the bearded iris, a fan of sword-like foliage is produced on rhizomes. Rhizomes are enlarged, underground horizontal stems that are located just below soil level. Each fan tends to bloom only once, so new fans are needed to produce flowers.

Wet the area with the rhizomes that you want to divide and wait one day before digging them. This will make digging the rhizomes easier. Dig up the clump with a spading fork or shovel. Avoid digging into the rhizomes.

Shake off the soil from the clump and wash away the soil if necessary. Then divide the clump by using a sharp knife to cut through the rhizomes. A division could contain two or three fans, but make sure there is at least one fan and some good roots on each rhizome.

Cut the leaves back to half or one-third of their length with sharp scissors. Cut back any damaged roots also.

Prepare the soil in the new bed by tilling and incorporating organic matter. Bearded iris grows best in full sun and well-drained soil.

Ready to plant? Dig two shallow holes, leaving a dividing ridge in the center; place the rhizome directly over the center of the ridge, spread the roots to either side, and cover with soil. The upper surface of the rhizome should be at or near ground level. Then water the rhizomes thoroughly.

Individual rhizomes can be planted in groupings. The spacing between individual rhizomes should be about 8 to 12 inches apart. Usually three are used to start a new clump. Arrange the group of three in a triangle. Two rhizomes should be planted with the fan of leaves facing out so new growth will develop outward. The third one is placed with the fan of leaves pointed into the space between the other two rhizomes so that it will fill into the center of the triangle. The clumps of three should be spaced about 18 to 24 inches apart.

Daylilies may become overgrown after five or six years and the clump begins to produce fewer flowers. Dividing them into fans can rejuvenate daylilies. A fan is a small plant that is made up of fibrous roots, a growing point called a crown, and leaves. Each fan can produce another fan.

To divide daylilies, loosen the clump around the outside with a spading fork; dig down into the soil about 12 inches and lift out the clump. Shake the soil loose or wash it away. Cut the foliage back to about 6 inches.

Begin to separate the mass by pulling or cutting apart sections into smaller pieces. Discard older woody fans. Pieces with three to four fans of foliage with strong roots quickly make a nice display in the garden. Daylilies prefer full sun and well-drained soil. They will grow in partial shade but produce fewer flowers.

Cover the roots with soil and water the plants thoroughly.

Look for cultivars of bearded iris and daylilies that re-bloom during the growing season to extend the beauty of your garden until the next time you need to divide and conquer.

For more information about iris and daylilies, and other topics, go to our website at www.gocomga.com and click the KPOV tab on the orange bar. Thanks for listening to, Gardening- Get Good at It! on KPOV, The Point.

Resources:

Dividing Iris and Daylilies

<https://easttexasgardening.tamu.edu/2014/05/23/dividing-irises-and-daylilies/>

Yard and Garden: Manage Bearded Irises, Peonies, and Daylilies

<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/news/yard-and-garden-manage-bearded-irises-peonies-daylilies>

Dividing Iris and Daylilies

https://daviess.ca.uky.edu/files/2016082116_newsarticle_hort_dividingirisanddaylilies.pdf

Daylilies

<https://extension.umn.edu/flowers/daylilies>