

Upon Receipt of Your Order

Care Before Planting

- 1. Open the box**—your plants will appreciate the fresh air.
- 2. Water any droopy plants**—wilting is a plant's natural defense against drying out. It's normal, just give them a good drink and they'll perk right back in several hours. If the plants are really dry, remove from the packing carrier and place in a shallow pan of water overnight. That way they can get a good long drink of water and will perk up by morning.
- 3. Set your plants outdoors** in a shady area until you're ready to plant.
- 4. Your plants will appreciate a couple of days in the shade** to recover from the rigors of shipping. They have not seen any sunlight for several days and this "time out" will let them reacclimatize.

Note: We may have cut back some of the plants. Don't be alarmed—they're fine. We do this to promote fuller, bushier growth, and to minimize any damage in transit. They'll quickly recover and flourish—we promise! If you do notice any perennials growing a single stalk straight up, it can (and should) be tipped back by removing the top 1" of growth. Any bent plant foliage will straighten out on its own, but please trim off any broken foilage.

- 5. If you wish to hold your plants longer than a few days before planting:** Not to worry, just water well when you see wilting—normally 2 to 3 times a week. Do plant them as soon as you can because they'll appreciate being in the ground. The sooner they

get growing the bigger they will get.

Note: Some Coco Pots may already be starting to break down and biodegrade. Don't worry—that's the whole idea. The process will really speed up once it gets planted in the ground.

Frequently Asked Questions

Are the sun/shade requirements good for my location? Yes, but gardeners in the deep south should err toward more shade when planting, whereas extreme northern gardeners should err towards more sun.

I can't plant my order for several weeks. What should I do? Set your plants outside in dappled shade. If it's forecasted to go below 28 degrees Fahrenheit you'll want to bunk them in your garage or porch overnight. All varieties, except mums and herbs, can take a hard frost. Get the plants back outside the next day as they will be happiest outdoors. Water when wilting occurs (not more often—resist any temptation to baby them). It's far better to under versus over water while holding. Normally, plants will get thirsty about twice a week and require a drink. If holding longer than 2-3 weeks feeding will be necessary. A product like Miracle Grow works nicely.

The frost free date for my area is several weeks away—did I receive my plants too soon? Perennials tolerate frost and freezing very well and are best planted at least 4-6 weeks ahead of your frost free date. After several days in the ground they can tolerate

temperatures as low as 26 degrees with no ill effects. Newly planted plants can be protected from an unexpected freeze the first few days with a sheet of newspaper weighted on two sides with some soil.

Now that my plants are in the ground how often should I water?

Your goal should be a self sufficient flower border. If you water everyday, you'll *always* have to water everyday. Normally, 1" of water a week from either you or Mother Nature is enough in the first year. You want the water to soak deeply so that the plants will send their roots down to look for water. The second year you can water every other week, more often just to help them through droughts, or if wilting before lunchtime.

When will my plants flower? Most perennials won't be truly outstanding until their second year. They'll be too busy growing their first year to flower at their fullest. As a rule of thumb, spring flowering varieties will flower before shipping and summer flowering varieties will put on $\frac{2}{3}$ of a show usually 6 weeks later their first season. Fall flowering varieties will almost reach full size, and put on a nice show their first year. Mums will reach full size and full flower their first year.

We welcome all comments and suggestions. Contact us by calling 800-852-5243, or send us an email at service@bluestoneperennials.com.

Perennial Planting Guide

Ground Preparation

A little time spent in soil preparation will be well rewarded. If annuals have grown well in the bed before without fertilizer, then no additional fertilizer will be required for perennials beyond an annual maintenance light feed each year. If fertilizer is added to the bed, it's best done well in advance of planting or at least mixed very well into the soil. It's always safe to add a light application of fertilizer to the top of the soil around the plants several weeks after planting or when the plants have begun to grow. All plant growing is a matter of judging plant response and deciding whether you are in the range of too much or too little, whether watering, spraying, fertilizing, as to temperature, sunshine, whatever. What you will be trying to achieve is a border that is established and can basically get along without any great effort each year. This is really a very realistic goal, and we hope that these plants and instructions will give you a good start in that direction.

Planting Instructions

1. Water the plants well the night before planting.

Cut off the plastic wrap (if any) at the top of the pot. The wrap and all our packaging can be recycled.

2. If the top of the pot is unraveling, you may wish to trim it back to the soil line.

It won't hurt anything but can look unsightly until your plant grows over it. We also don't want it to possibly act like a "wick" and draw any moisture away from the plant. You can also tuck the frayed edge under the soil when planting.

3. You may find it helpful to first set out your plants where you think you'll be planting them.

Step back, take a look, and rearrange as necessary. When all looks pleasing, begin to dig holes and plant (our version of the "measure twice—cut once" school of planting).

4. Plant your plant—pot and all. The roots will quickly grow right through the 100% biodegradable pot and into the surrounding soil.

5. Place each plant a little below the soil line. Leaving a ring of ridged soil will help you water in thoroughly. Water deeply to settle the plant and remove any air pockets around the roots. If in doubt—dig a pilot hole near the plant and see if the water soaked deeper than the pot. If not, water again.

6. Water when you see wilt and the soil is dry to your touch. Plants can wilt on sudden hot days after wet spells because they grew more foliage than their roots can support. When allowed to dry out, they'll realize this and will push root growth to get back in "balance". Constant shallow watering will make your plant dependent on you. Infrequent deep watering will promote a self-sufficient garden, and healthier plants!

Water & Summer Care

The first year, water will be required during prolonged dry spells—1" a week is the general norm. You can set a few cans in the border when watering to check the amount applied, or dig down a few inches 30 minutes after watering to see how deep the water has penetrated. A good 6" is ideal. New gardeners are often surprised to find that what they considered a good soaking is only wetting the soil to a depth of an inch or so. If plants aren't watered deeply, they can turn out quite well but will be very shallow rooted.

Subsequently, the plants can be hurt if a few days of watering are skipped and the top of the soil becomes dry. It's far better to strengthen your plants by deep watering when needed. This will make borders self-sufficient—exactly what perennial gardeners have in mind.

To keep weeds down, lightly scratch the soil as weeds are starting to show. This will destroy the few weeds that are visible as well as the multitudes that are just starting to break out of their seeds below. In order to germinate, seeds must be in the top of the soil layer, be in good contact with the soil, have ample moisture, and almost all have to be in the light. That's why once your new plants are up to size, the weed problem becomes minimal. As the plants mature and shade most of the ground, scratching the soil to minimize weeds can be more vigorous and watering less frequent.

For the most part, the plants are insect and disease free. You shouldn't need any spraying unless a major invasion of sucking or chewing insects moves in from somewhere nearby. The damage should be easily apparent well in time to use a general insecticide such as SEVIN or a general purpose spray before any real harm is done.

Fall & Winter Care

It's common practice to cut the entire perennial bed down to about 6" in late fall to remove any old debris that will be in the way next season. This is also a good time to pull out any dead annuals from the border so there is no question in the spring whether a dead looking clump is *really* dead or is actually a valuable perennial, not yet awake. Most perennials will show signs of life at the crown early in the spring, and with the annual tops gone the fall before, spring cleanup can be delayed

quite a while. No plants need to be lost to an overzealous worker!

A light application of fertilizer can be made anytime from late fall to early summer on established beds to maintain the health of the bed.

Mulching

DECORATIVE/WEED SUPPRESSION

Personal Choice. The Pros: It will keep the root zone cooler and helps retain soil moisture. Mulch also looks nice and helps control weeds. The Cons: Can be expensive, won't stop grassy weeds, will tie up Nitrogen as it decays, and can repel water if it totally dries out. We like to apply a shallow layer (1-2") about 6 weeks after planting. This will allow you to cultivate the soil several times thus killing all the weeds as they germinate. Take care not to cover the crown of the plants. You'll find that additional mulch next year may not be necessary as the plants will fill in nicely and help control weeds themselves.

WINTER PROTECTION

We don't recommend mulching for winter protection except for extreme northern gardeners who don't have reliable snow cover. The plants are very hardy and shouldn't normally require winter protection. Many, many more plants are lost to smothering and rotting than to temperature extremes. If you decide to mulch, remember to wait until the ground is frozen hard to apply it. Use excelsior, salt hay, evergreen boughs, straw—anything that won't mat down or smother works well (avoid leaves and grass clippings). The mulch will need to be removed with the first thaw. In Ohio, we typically have December, January and February thaws, so we don't bother mulching as it would do more harm than good. If in doubt, our advice is don't.

Moving & Increasing Plants

As you gain experience with perennials, you may want to change the position of some of the plants. They can all be moved at almost anytime by lifting them with a good clump of soil intact around the roots. In early spring and in the fall, the plants can be dug without soil on the roots, but when the plants are in growth, they cannot establish new hair roots in time to keep up with the demands of the tops. Plants can be dug and divided even after they've begun to grow in the spring, but the longer you wait, the more care they will need to reestablish themselves. If a plant is divided and reset with no wilting of the tops, they're fine. If they do wilt they should be watered again or even shaded with a board or open box until new roots can start in two or three days. For a start, you might try cracking a piece off the side of some plants just after the ground warms, transplanting these to new spots (leaving the main part of the plant undisturbed). Dianthus have a central stem and cannot be split, and Astilbes have such a hard center that they'd have to be dug in order to cut or divide them. Some plants, such as Coreopsis and Shasta Daisies, will seed themselves. These new plants can be saved once you learn to recognize the seedlings.

Insects & Diseases

If you see these symptoms of common plant problems, there are many excellent chemical and natural products on the market which can help. Your local garden center should be able to offer suggestions. It's always okay to use an insecticidal soap, such as Safer's Soap, for insects. A general purpose fungicide can be a good

preventative measure if the summer is particularly soggy.

Red Spider (and other mites): Plants are yellow and weak. The undersides of the leaves are always dirty when examined (from soil sticking to the fine webs.) Tap a leaf over a piece of white paper and you will see tiny specs. If they start crawling, then you have spider mites. The bigger mites can be seen by the eye. Often first seen with the heat of summer.

Powdery Mildew: Leaves are disfigured by a white coating resembling mold. Begins when there is little air movement or when night dews become prevalent in late July. Use fungicides listing Powdery Mildew by midsummer until late August (in Ohio). Leaf damage remains even with treatment, unfortunately.

Leafminer: White curling trails are seen in the leaves, most often in late spring only.

Aphids & Chewing Insects: Holes in leaves or along leaf margins, or visible insects along stems.

Leaf Spots: Dark brown spots on leaves can be caused by a fungus or by over-watering. Red pustules (bumps) can indicate rust.

Spittle Bugs: Bubbly masses in the leaf axils.

White Fly: Small white insects fly when disturbed. Responds well to insecticidal soap.

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Additional Information

Clematis Care

Clematis are the Queens of the Climbers, prized for their incredible flowers and ability to train onto trellises, fences, or arch over doorways. They only need to have their roots shaded and their flowers in the sun. Pruning Types are noted in both the printed catalog and the online catalog

Type 1: Flowers are produced from old stems, so prune immediately after flowering has stopped by removing all dead and weak stems. Larger, older plants (over 15') normally don't need to be pruned, especially if growing in trees. Tie stems into place after flowering. New growth will begin, and these are the stems for next year's flowers.

Type 2: In this group all first flowering comes from last season's ripening stems. In early spring, watch for swelling leaf buds beginning to show. Cut all dead material off above these swelling buds. Be sure all growth is tied to the trellis, etc. at this time. Don't tie too tightly, so growth won't be hampered or cracked.

Type 3: This group blooms later and from new growth. These should be pruned in February or March as new leaf buds begin to show low on the plant. Also remove all dead material above the buds and clean out any old or mildewed foliage.

Ornamental Grass Care

Many Ornamental grass varieties feature striking flowers stalks which will go dormant in the winter months. Before the next growing season begins it's a good idea to trim the stalks, usually to about 4-6" above the soil level. If the stalks break or are unsightly, they can also be trimmed any time of the year.

The following varieties will benefit from cutting back in late winter to early spring:

- **Calamagrostis** - *Feather Reed Grass*
- **Chasmanthium** - *Northern Sea Oats*
- **Festuca** - *Blue Fescue*
- **Miscanthus** - *Maiden Grass*
- **Panicum** - *Switch Grass*
- **Pennisetum** - *Fountain Grass*
- **Schizachyrium** - *Silver Bluestem*
- **Sisyrinchium** - *Blue Eyed Grass*
- **Sorghastrum** - *Indian Grass*

The following varieties need the old leaves "teased" out in spring:

- **Carex** - *Japanese Sedge Grass*
- **Eragrostis** - *Sand Love Grass*
- **Hakonechloa** - *Hakone Grass*
- **Helictotrichon Sempervirens** - *Blue Oat Grass*

Hydrangea Care

All Hydrangeas will need supplemental watering in long dry spells. However, well-draining soil is important for the longevity of the plant.

Macrophylla (*Bigleaf Mopheads & Lacecaps*): These need very little pruning and are best suited where height restriction is not an issue. If desired, prune in late June or July before bloom buds are set in August for the next year. Pruning before or after this will reduce or even prohibit blooming the next year. Deadheading is fine any time. Remove any dead canes or tops of canes that have not leafed out in the spring.

Note: All season bloomers like All Summer Beauty and the Let's Dance series can be pruned at any time without danger of missing a season of blooming.

Paniculatas & Arborescens (*Bombshell, Fire & Ice, Little Lime, Pinky Winky*): Can be pruned any time

other than summer—fall, winter and spring are fine—but will not need to be pruned every year. Remove crossing branches and shape when necessary. These bloom on new wood and can be trained into a tree form by encouraging a strong central trunk.

Anomala (*Climbing Hydrangea, Firefly*): No trimming required. May require tying to a sturdy trellis or tree when young, but not for long.

Involucrata (*Blue Bunny*): Blooms on new wood, so can be shaped at anytime other than when in bloom.

Containers

Almost every plant we grow will be okay in a container for one season. The difficulty comes in wintering over the container. Since the roots are now "above ground" in the container, the moderating effect of the soil's warmth is lost. Either transplant the perennials into your fall border, or sink the entire container in the ground. In mid zones, you might get away with protecting the container with hay bales, or by placing the container along the sheltered foundation of your house.



Your Garden's Best Friend

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