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SOIL PREPARATION & PLANTING FOR PERENNIAL AND ANNUAL BEDS

EVALUATE YOUR SITE AND SOIL

TRIPLE CREEK FLOWER FARM AND BLOOMERS GARDEN CENTER SELLS A FULL RANGE OF ANNUALS PERENNIALS, TREES, SHRUBS AND GROWDCOVERS TO SUIT ALMOST ANY SITE. SELECTING PLANTS TO SUIT YOUR PLANTING CONDITIONS WILL RESULT IN MORE SUCESSFUL GARDENING. CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING WHEN MAKING YOUR PLANT SELECTIONS.

- 1. WHAT IS YOUR SUN OR SHADE EXPOSURE – I.E. FULL SUN, PARTIAL SHADE OR SHADE**
- 2. WHAT IS YOUR SOIL TYPE – I.E. SANDY, LOAM, CLAY**
- 3. SOIL MOISTURE – I.E. WET, AVERAGE OR DRY**
- 4. DRAINAGE – WELL DRAINED, AVERAGE OR POOR (DAMP OR WET)**

STUDIES SHOW THAT ABOUT 80% OF ALL PLANT PROBLEMS ARE RELATED TO POOR SOIL CONDITIONS. WE HIGHLY RECOMMEND A SOIL TEST TO DETERMINE THE BEST AMENDMENTS FOR YOUR SOIL.

SOIL PREPARATION USUALLY TAKES PLACE IN THE SPRING AND FALL. WHATEVER THE SEASON, DO NOT WORK THE SOIL IF IT IS TOO WET.

SOIL PREPARATION

STARTING A FLOWER BED FROM SCRATCH INVOLVES A LOT OF HARD WORK, BUT PAYS OFF IN THE FORM OF HEALTHIER, MORE PRODUCTIVE PLANTS. BEGIN BY REMOVING THE LAYER OF SOD, WEEDS OR WHATEVER ELSE MIGHT BE GROWING THERE. GET RID OF ROCKS AND LOOSEN THE SOIL DEPTH FROM EIGHT TO TWELVE INCHES WITH A SPADING FORK OR SHOVEL. (OBVIOUSLY THIS WORK IS MADE A LOT EASIER IF YOU HAVE A ROTOTILLER!)

THE IDEAL SOIL FOR MOST PERENNIALS IS WELL DRAINED, LOAMY, HIGH IN ORGANIC MATTER AND WITH A NEUTRAL OR SLIGHTLY ACIDIC (PH 6.0 TO 7.5). VERY FEW SITES ARE BLESSED WITH SUCH PERFECT CONDITIONS, SO WHEN YOU DIG, DO WHAT YOU CAN TO IMPROVE THE SOIL. THE ADDITION OF ORGANIC MATTER IMPROVES DRAINAGE, AERATION, MOISTURE RETENTION AND NUTRIENT AVAILABILITY.

SPREAD A GENEROUS LAYER (UP TO 6 INCHES) OF COMPOST OR WELL ROTTED MANURE OVER THE NEWLY SPADED BED. TAKE CARE WHEN USING MANURE. FRESH MANURE SHOULD BE COMPOSTED OR APPLIED THE FALL PRIOR TO PLANTING TO REDUCE THE RISK OF BURNING TENDER ROOTS. PEAT DOES NOT ADD NUTRIENTS BUT DOES IMPROVE SOIL STRUCTURE AND HELP PREVENT COMPACTION.

TO RAISE THE PH OF THE AVERAGE GARDEN SOIL ONE POINT, APPLY PELLETIZED LIME AT A RATE OF ABOUT 4 LBS. / 100 SQ. FT. VERY SANDY SOILS NEED LESS LIME , WHILE HEAVY CLAY SOILS REQUIRE ABOUT 30 % MORE. ALL THESE AMENDMENTS AS WELL AS A WELL BALANCED ORGANIC FERTILIZER SHOULD BE THOROUGHLY MIXED INTO THE SOIL BEFORE RAKING THE BED LEVEL AND ALLOWING THE TO SETTLE.

THE SOIL OF AN ESTABLISHED BED DOES NOT NEED TO BE TURNED OR CULTIVATED UNLESS IT BECOMES COMPACTED. ADDING AN INCH OR TWO OF ORGANIC MATTER TO THE SURFACE BETWEEN THE PLANTS EVERY FALL SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT. TAKE CARE NOT TO BURY THE "CROWNS" OF THE PERENNIALS.

PLANNING AND LAYOUT

TO ACHIEVE THE BEST RESULTS, SOME THOUGHT SHOULD GO INTO THE PLANNING YOUR PERENNIAL GARDEN BEFORE THE PLANTS ARE SET INTO THE GROUND. THE PLAN CAN BE AS SIMPLE AS ARRANGING THE POTS ON THE GROUND BEFORE PLANTING OR AS ELABORATE AS A SCALE DRAWING. GROUPS OF 3 TO 5 OF THE SAME VARIETY GIVE THE BEST SHOW. ALLOW SPACE FOR THE NEW PLANTS TO SPREAD AS THEY GROW (MOST PLANT LABELS OFFER SUGGESTIVE SPACING REQUIREMENTS) INITIALLY, YOU MAY WANT TO FILL THE SPACE WITH COLORFUL ANNUALS. BEFORE PLANTING WATER YOUR PERENNIALS WELL AND BE SURE TO LOOSEN ANY ROOTS THAT MAY ENCIRCLE THE POT PLANT THE PERENNIAL AT THE SAME LEVEL AS IT WAS IN THE POT GENTLY FIRING THE SURROUNDING SOIL. WATER IN AND MULCH WELL. CONTINUE TO PAY ATTENTION TO WATERING UNTIL THE PLANT IS ESTABLISHED. WATER WHEN THE SOIL BEGINS TO DRY RATHER THAN ON AN ARTIFICIAL OR PREDETERMINED SCHEDULE.