

Arcadian Daylilies

September 2004 Newsletter

You want to provide the best care for your Daylilies **We want to be the Source for the Best Daylilies and the Best Advice**

Autumn Care & Winter Problems

Everyone is used to planting bulbs in the autumn. The bulbs remain frozen in the ground over winter then start growing in the spring, when the air and soil temperatures have reached what Mother Nature considers the correct levels.

Daylilies over winter in the ground and emerge in spring in much the same manner. Different cultivars will emerge earlier or later and different foliage types (Dor, Semi Ev, Evergreen) will be affected differently by spring stresses.

Losses of over wintered daylilies usually can be attributed to one of 3 reasons.

- 1) Winter low temperature is too low for that cultivar causing irreparable cell damage.
- 2) Evergreen cultivars start growing too early in spring and refreeze, causing damage to tender new tissue and resultant loss.
- 3) Repeated thaw and refreeze can cause damage to even the toughest daylilies.

Understanding the problems can help us protect our investment.

Winter Mulch

A few yards down the soil temperature will remain very constant year round at about 55 degrees Fahrenheit. During winter, heat from the deep ground slowly moves upward and escapes into the cold air. During hot summer weather, the opposite occurs with the surface soil being gently cooled by the ground below.

Use of mulch can help to moderate the surface temperature of our flowerbeds.

A thick snow cover is an excellent mulch keeping the soil temperature much warmer than air temperature during the worst cold snaps, and preventing the soil from thawing during mid winter warm spells. Snow cover is of course unpredictable and unreliable.

A thick layer of any material that traps air will create an insulating blanket just like the blankets we use to keep ourselves warm. Straw, shredded bark, pine needles, wood shavings and even sawdust all can be used as mulch.

Any organic mulch will decompose with time, affecting soil tilth, chemistry and fertility. That discussion will be dealt with in a future newsletter.

Spring Mulch

There is a period in spring, just as the first daylily cultivars start emerging from the ground, that it is beneficial to rake back and remove all the mulch. Allowing the soil to warm and dry during this period will prevent anaerobic bacterial action in soggy soil, which could lead to damage to plants.

Later in spring the mulch can be reapplied to help suppress weed development and retain soil moisture through the summer.

Autumn Planting

There is evidence that daylilies divided late in the season may experience a higher winter loss. Dividing daylilies often leaves large cuts or breaks where the crown has been separated, and damage to roots. The later in the season, the less time there is for vegetative growth and healing, leaving exposed entry points for pathogens to attack the plant during winter stress periods.

Late season division of valuable daylilies is probably best left until spring when a much more vigorous vegetative growth will accelerate healing.

Late season planting of Container Grown Plants does not result in the same problems because the plant is simply being moved from container to ground without creating wounds or causing damage. The same applies for lined out plants that are dug and replanted without dividing. When planting container grown daylilies it is helpful to loosen the root ball enough to spread the roots over a cone shaped mound of garden soil in the center of the hole being planted in.

We have oftentimes planted daylilies in December right up until freeze up. Fall plantings even late fall plantings emerge in spring as though they were established plants. Our experience is that fall plantings outperform spring plantings in terms of first year growth and bloom.

There are a few considerations to avoid the above noted winter problems and make these late season plantings as successful as any.

Frost heaving is an avoidable problem. Plants that are inadequately anchored in ground that thaws and refreezes several times, may actually be pushed up out of the ground, leaving crown and roots exposed to severe damage. Spreading the roots over as large an area as possible when planting will minimize frost heaving, as will ensuring that the ground has been well tamped and watered until saturated to ensure that as little air is trapped around the roots as possible. Various

techniques have been described like placing a brick on either side of the fan to prevent the roots from being lifted out. Avoiding thaw/refreeze cycles by using mulch is probably the best protection against heaving.

Fertilizing all new plantings with a water soluble starter fertilizer (10-52-10), which does not contain damaging chlorides or sulphates will help initiate root development and plant anchoring, even in cool weather. High nitrogen fertilizers should be avoided in autumn. Nitrogen stimulates new foliage growth, and late in the season plants should be encouraged to harden off and go dormant, rather than grow tender new foliage.

Time Release Fertilizers

There are many types and grades of slow release and controlled release fertilizers. The way they function is different for each.

We use premium grade Nutricote and Multicote fertilizers in 4, 6 and 9 month release formulations. Release rate of the nutrients from these fertilizers is temperature and moisture dependant. When the release rate is described at 72°F that is only an indication of how long it will take to release the major portion of the nutrients at that constant temperature. At higher temperature with adequate moisture the nutrients will release faster and at lower temperature or in dry soils much more slowly. These fertilizers can be used safely with fall plantings as virtually no nutrients are released over winter and release of nutrients in the spring will accelerate as temperatures rise and rate of growth increases.

Please pass this newsletter on to anyone you think may be interested.

Intended to inform and not to annoy just let us know if you would prefer to be removed from our email list.

September ½ Price Sale

Check our website

www.ArcadianDaylilies.com for updated list of available cultivars and inventory counts.