



August 2018

A few articles of interest to many of us have recently crossed my desk and I thought I would share these with TCGC Members as they relate to things we could be doing now.

Tip of the Week: Divide Irises in Summer



Categories: [Propagation](#), [Weekly Tips](#) | Tags: [tip of the week](#)
July 6, 2010 | [Meghan Shinn](#)

Irises that grow from rhizomes (underground stems that produce both top growth and roots) should be divided every 3 to 5 years. Rhizomatous types include bearded, Siberian and Japanese irises. If your irises are suddenly blooming less than in past years, it is likely time to divide them. The best time to divide bearded irises is about a month after they finish blooming. During that month, they continue to grow underground, then they become dormant. While they're dormant, dig them up, divide them and replant them. The divisions will break dormancy in the fall and begin to grow roots again until the end of the season, getting well established in their new places. Japanese and Siberian irises can also be divided in summer after they bloom, but you will need to be sure to keep the new plants watered during dry spells. In areas where it will be consistently over 90°F, wait until autumn or spring.

To divide irises, dig up the clump. Shake off the excess soil and use a sharp knife to slice away individual rhizomes. Keep only the ones that are firm, dry and have roots and a fan of leaves attached. You can cut the leaves back to six inches to make the new plants more balanced (roots vs leaves), but remember the leaves will feed the roots through photosynthesis, so don't remove them entirely. Discard the original rhizomes off of which the new ones have grown, because they won't flower again.

Keep Siberian and Japanese iris roots damp until replanting. Bearded irises can be stored dry for a few days to a couple weeks before replanting, and this may prevent rot. Soak the roots and rhizome for a few hours before planting if you have stored them dry. When planting, make a mound in the middle of the planting hole to rest the rhizome on. Just barely cover the top of bearded irises' rhizomes with soil; bury Siberian and Japanese irises to two or three inches. Water bearded irises when planting, then leave them dry. Keep the other types well watered for the rest of the season. They may not bloom the first year.

Q: It's the middle of summer and my container plants look stressed. I haven't changed my routine, so what am I doing wrong? I need container gardening ideas to help my plants bounce back.



Container

gardening changes with the season, and your question contains your answer: you haven't changed your routine. In the spring, when the days are warm, nights are cool and the sun is not so unforgiving, container plantings thrive. As heat, humidity and the intensity of the sun increase in summer, we need to shift our container-care protocol.

If you think your containers are too small, they are. If you think they are perfect, check again; chances are they are too small. We tend to select pots to fit the plant as it is in the spring, not to accommodate mature plants. Larger plants mean more roots as well as more water and nutritional needs. The smaller the pot, the less soil it can hold, which means it will dry out and heat up more quickly, stressing your plants.

Once you have larger containers, make them mobile. When hot, drying winds kick in and the sun beats down, you can give your plants some respite by moving them to a shaded, protected spot in the garden or on the patio. You can keep your large containers on wheeled trivets (with the wheels footed to keep the pots in park, so to speak) or you can use a hand truck, or handled dolly.

You must be diligent with watering. Pots often need watering every day in the height of summer. Water them deeply in the early morning; a second drink may be needed in late afternoon. More watering means more leaching of nutrients from the soil. You may need to feed more often to compensate for the increased watering routine.

Lastly, too many containers too close together can reduce air circulation, not a good thing when the days are terribly hot. Give your plants room to breathe.

AUTHOR BIO: *Jennifer Smith* is an avid gardener who holds certificates in landscape design and horticulture. Read more expert container gardening tips in the [July/August 2017 issue of Horticulture](#)

Our next issue of *CYDI* will be mainly devoted to the GCA 2018 Shirley Meneice Horticulture Conference your Horticulture Chairman will be attending in September at Longwood Gardens.

Some of the workshops I will be attending include:

- Igniting your winter landscape
- Designing with amazing annuals
- From tissue culture to stunning displays
- Growing non-stop Dahlias
- Seeing the secrets of nature

I look forward to sharing all this with you!

Trish