Transplanting tips for vibrant gardens

Source: Rick Durham, extension professor, Department of Horticulture

Last time, we talked about how growing your own vegetables and flowers from seed indoors or under a protective covering outside can expand your choices. You can find that information at <https://bit.ly/3dgPP7h>. (OR INSERT LINK TO AGENT’S COLUMN)

When the chance of frost has passed, it’s time to think about transplanting your young plants to the garden. About two weeks before you do that, you should harden (toughen) them off to help them withstand the outside environment. To do so, begin reducing water and fertilizer (but don’t let them dry out) and expose them to lower temperatures by taking your plants outside. Bring them in at night if the temperature is expected to drop into the 40s. Also expose them gradually to brighter and brighter light outside. Start off protecting them from strong midday sun and then over the course of a few days move them into full sun conditions.

Transplanting will temporarily check a plant’s growth. Therefore, for successful transplanting, try to interrupt plant growth as little as possible. Follow these steps when transferring them to your garden:

1. Transplant on a shady day in late afternoon or in early evening to prevent wilting.

2. Soak transplants’ roots thoroughly an hour or two before setting them in the garden.

3. Handle the plants carefully. Avoid disturbing the roots. It is better to grasp plants by their leaves than their tender stems.

4. Dig a hole large enough to hold the roots. For most plants, keep the soil depth similar to how they were previously growing. Tomatoes and peppers can be transplanted more deeply, since they develop roots on parts of the stem that is submerged in the soil. Press soil firmly around the roots.

5. Pour one cup of water around each plant and for a bonus start add some soluble fertilizer to the water (follow label directions).

6. Put more soil around each plant leaving a slight depression for water to collect.

7. Water the plants once or twice during their first week in the garden. If you didn’t fertilize at planting, add fertilizer to the water at some point during the first week or so of growth. Follow fertilizer label directions for when to add additional fertilizer.

8. Watch your garden thrive.

For more information about starting plants for your flower or vegetable garden, contact the (COUNTY NAME) office of the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service.

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