Thank you for your order!

About this brochure

Within this cultural brochure, you will find information and answers to frequently asked questions about cultivation, planting, and soil preparation. For other general concerns and answers to customer questions regarding our plant material visit our FAQ page online at www.songsparrow.com.

When you receive your order

Since plants are living things, please unpack and inspect your shipment at once; your plants will need attention. If there is a problem with the plant material, please notify Song Sparrow immediately by calling 1-800-553-3715. Do not plant anything that does not appear to be satisfactory. Claims must be made within 48 hours of receipt of shipment to be honored.

Dormancy

If your plants look a little worn and tired in the fall, or as if they have not yet started growing for spring, please remember that our nursery is in a cold climate and our plants will spend the winter in a dormant state. They are doing what is natural for them at that time of year. They will all go into dormancy and then reemerge according to their own individual time table. So don’t worry, they are doing what is natural.

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PERENNIALS

General Care of Shade Perennials

Shade perennials do best with less than six hours of sunlight. Good soil preparation will reward the gardener with thriving plants. Deep, loose, well-drained soil with ample compost incorporated is ideal. Dig a hole 1½-2 times larger than the pot size. Firm the soil that the new plant will sit upon so that the plant does not sink down when watered. Remove the entire soil clump from the pot and plant it at the same level it is growing in the pot. The top of the root ball should be level with the surrounding ground. Firm the soil around the new plant and water thoroughly to eliminate air pockets and to create good root-to-soil contact. To help ensure that new plants do not dry out, add a light application of mulch covering the root zone area and a few inches beyond it, to help conserve moisture. Avoid putting mulch on the foliage and center growing point (the crown) of perennials or they may rot. A slow release fertilizer can be applied in springtime. Cut back stems and foliage and remove them in the late fall.

Hosta and Miniature Hosta

Ideal Conditions for Planting

Hosta thrive in cool, moist, shady locations. Chalky blue leafed varieties need the most shade. Green leafed and golden leafed varieties can tolerate more sun. Golden Hosta need some sun to bring out their intense yellow color. Variegated varieties prefer shady areas. It is important to pick your planting site carefully so that the plant does not need to be moved. A minimum of three growing seasons in one location is necessary for Hosta to establish themselves and mature to adulthood. Mulching the first winter is a good practice. To plant, carefully remove soil root ball from the pot. If the roots have wound around the root ball, work your fingers into the root ball to loosen it up. Breaking this root pattern helps the plant reroot and grow into the new soil environment. Large leafed varieties should be spaced approximately 24”-30” apart and smaller leafed varieties should be spaced approximately 12”-18” apart. We list widths with our descriptions to help you allow the correct amount of space for each plant. Hosta develop a tremendous leaf surface. Large amounts of water transpire from them on hot, sunny days making moisture retentive soil important. You can help provide this by working liberal amounts of organic matter and compost into the soil before planting.

Maintenance and Care

Hosta must be watered well as they become established in their new environment, but do not over water to the point of soggy soil. Adding slow release super phosphate fertilizer to the soil mixture is also helpful to establish strong plants. The most common pest problems for Hosta are slugs and snails. If they are a problem in your area, look for Hosta with descriptions that include attributes such as heavily textured leaves, thick substance, or being slug resistant. There are many to choose from. Cut back stems and foliage and remove them in the late fall.

Shade Perennials, Hosta
General Care of Sun Perennials

Sun perennials require at least six hours of light. In the South they will benefit from some shade in the afternoon when the heat from the sun peaks. Good soil preparation helps ensure success with these plants. Deep, loose, well-drained soil with ample incorporated compost is ideal and will help grow beautiful, vigorous plants. Dig a hole 1½-2 times larger than the pot size. Firm the soil that the new plant will sit upon so that the plant does not sink down when watered. Remove the entire soil clump from the pot and plant it at the same level it is growing in the pot. The top of the root ball should be level with the surrounding ground. Firm the soil around the new plant and water thoroughly to eliminate air pockets and to create good root-to-soil contact. To help ensure that new plants do not dry out, add a light application of mulch covering the root zone and a few inches beyond it, to help conserve moisture. Avoid putting mulch on the foliage and center growing point (the crown) of perennials or they may rot. A slow release fertilizer can be applied in springtime. Cut back stems and foliage and remove from the garden in late fall. Perennials with winter interest, such as Echinacea and grasses, can be cut back in early spring before new growth begins.

Hemerocallis (Daylily)

Ideal Conditions for Planting

Our cold hardy, “dormant” type daylilies will grow and bloom in any kind of good soil, but thrive best over the years if given proper care. They grow well in full sun to partial shade. Before planting, soak roots in a weak solution of fertilizer in water for a few hours or overnight before planting. Daylilies should be planted in a well drained location. The soil should be prepared with deep cultivation (1-2 feet) adding compost or leaf mold. After the soil is prepared, a hole should be dug that is slightly wider than the root mass. Mound soil in the center of the hole and place plant on the mound. Fill in the hole so that the crown is at the same depth it was growing in the nursery (there will be a band of white marking the part that was underground) or slightly lower, approximately 1” to ½”, than the surrounding soil surface and tamp down firmly. Water thoroughly. Daylilies should be spaced 18” to 24” apart.

Maintenance and Care

For best results and maximum flowering, Hemerocallis should receive 1” of water a week during June, July, and August. Daylilies are moisture tolerant, making them an excellent problem solver for hard-to-landscape areas. Rose food is an ideal fertilizer for daylilies. Apply in early spring when warmer days are pushing the plants to grow and again after the plants have finished blooming. Use half the recommended application rates to avoid injuring the plants with too much fertilizer. Daylilies are practically disease and pest free. However, good siting, which encourages vigorous growth, is your best preventative.

It may be necessary to watch for thrips, aphids and spider mites. Mites draw chlorophyll from leaves. The leaves lose their color, turn tan, then brown and soon die. Heavily infested plants may be covered with fine webbing. Aphid damage appears in several forms. Characteristics are irregular color in new growth, white flecks on the foliage or a clear sticky substance on the leaf surface. Thrips feed on the bloom and tender branches of the daylily. Thrip damage is characterized by a rough lesion on the stems or by bent and twisted stems with malformed buds. It is important to promptly remove any infected parts of the plant from the garden area and dispose of them.
Peony and Rock Garden Peonies (Herbaceous Peonies)

Ideal Conditions for Fall Planting

Herbaceous Peonies do best in sunny, well drained locations. They will tolerate partial sun. Too much shade will reduce their bloom quality and quantity. Before planting, soak peony roots in water for 6 hours if they were allowed to dry out. Cultivate soil well and mix in compost before planting. After soil is prepared, dig a hole large enough to accommodate the root system. In the North, the eyes (the pointy buds along the roots) should be about 2" below the soil surface. Southern gardeners should plant peonies with eyes 1”-1½” below the soil line. (Lay a yardstick across the hole to help judge depth.) Place the root in the hole with the eyes pointing up, and fill with soil. Firm soil gently and water thoroughly. No part of the Peony should appear above the ground until spring. Spring growth will initiate from the eyes that were on the root in the fall. Stake or tag the planting area to mark the location and name of newly planted roots. Space peonies 3’-4’ apart. For the first winter, apply a 3"-4” layer of loose, porous mulch. This is especially important in the North, or with late-season planting. Pull it away from the plant in early spring to keep emerging buds free of any debris that may harbor disease.

Maintenance and Care

Peonies are tolerant of a wide pH range, but a slightly acidic to near neutral soil (pH 6.0-7.0) is recommended. Peonies should not be over-fertilized or flowering may be reduced. We recommend a light application (approximately half of what the package directions suggest) of rose food, bone meal, or a slow release fertilizer. Fertilizer should be applied in the spring when the foliage is approximately 6”-8” tall; place it around the drip line of the leaves.

Botrytis is the most common disease problem and is most prevalent during wet seasons. Watch for young shoots that have rotted off at the base and have developed a dense gray mold early in the season. Blasted buds or blooms are also indications of infection. Careful sanitation is the most important aspect of controlling botrytis. Regular inspection of the plant and removal of any infected leaves is the best procedure for control. When foliage turns brown in the late fall, it should be cut back to the ground and removed. This prevents carry over of any foliage disease spores that might be present.

Intersectional or Itoh Hybrid Peonies

Ideal Conditions for Planting

Itoh Peonies prefer an open sunny site, but can tolerate light shade. In warmer, southern climates some shade from hot, mid-day sun is beneficial. Soil must be well drained and contain generous levels of organic matter which can be mixed in at planting time. A slow release fertilizer should also be added when planting. The prepared area should be 2’ wide by 2‘ deep for good root development. The top of the containerized root ball should be planted to be level with the surrounding ground, fill the hole with soil, gently firm, and water well. A 2”-3” layer of organic mulch will help maintain moisture.

Maintenance and Care

Water the newly planted Itoh Peony regularly. Check under the mulch for soil moisture. Do not over water.
CLEMATIS

General Care of Clematis

Our container grown Clematis can be planted from spring through early fall in a location that provides the vines with 5 to 6 hours of sunlight daily. An organic, rich, porous and well-drained soil, up to 2’ deep will encourage the development of a strong, deep root system. It is important that Clematis roots are kept cool and shaded. Adjacent plantings of shallow rooted annuals, perennials or shrubs (through which the Clematis can grow) all help in creating a shaded, cool root environment. Organic mulch can also work to keep the roots cool and shaded in addition to conserving moisture.

Ideal Conditions for Planting

After carefully removing the plant from the pot, keeping the trellis in place, plant in freshly prepared soil so that the soil level in the pot is 1”-2” below ground level. Firm the soil around the newly installed plant and immediately water to drive out air pockets and ensure good root to soil contact. Staking is recommended at the time of planting. To help ensure that new plants do not dry out, add a light application of mulch which will aid in moisture conservation. Feed twice a year, first after growth begins in spring, and again in mid to late summer with a balanced organic or water soluble fertilizer.

Maintenance and Care

New growth should be either tied to a support, or the tendrils can be guided to grow along it. Do not trim the clematis the first year it is planted. In subsequent years, prune your clematis according to the following pruning guidelines, as referenced below. New plantings do benefit from mulching, being careful to keep mulch away from the crown.

Clematis Pruning Groups:

Pruning groups are listed with each description in our catalog and online.

- **Prune 1**: Spring blooms on old stems. Prune lightly to shape vine immediately after flowering.
- **Prune 2**: Repeat bloomers have first flowering on old stems, then second on new growth. In spring, when leaf buds to begin to swell, lightly prune to shape.
- **Prune 3**: Summer and later flowers on new growth. Hard prune in early spring as new leaf buds begin to swell low on the plant. Trim to 8”-12” tall, to a pair of strong looking buds.

Clematis in Containers

When space is limited, Clematis can be enjoyed as container plants, ideal for growing on patios or in a cool conservatory. Combined with colorful annuals, especially those with a trailing habit, they add height and extended ornamental appeal to container combinations. Many Clematis thrive in containers. The large, early flowering, compact growing varieties are among the preferred choices. For ultimate success, use a pot 2’ deep by 1½’-2’ wide with appropriate drainage. Containers should be raised above the ground to prevent water saturation around the base. Plant in early spring with the top of the soil ball about 2” below the soil level in the container, and water thoroughly. Most well-draining potting mixes are suitable (and usually work better than the average garden soil). New growth should be trained on
a wooden framework or up bamboo canes tied at the tops to create a wigwam effect. Water regularly, never allowing the potting soil to dry out. Mulching helps containers maintain moisture. A liquid fertilizer can be used from late spring through midsummer, or a slow release fertilizer added to the potting mix. Such treatment is important with the reblooming varieties and is necessary for the ongoing success of companion plants in the container. Remember that Clematis ideally require cool conditions for their roots and warm sunny conditions for their top growth, so site the container accordingly. In areas with harsh winter weather, containers should be allowed to dry out as fall advances and stored over winter in a dry, frost-free location, such as a garage.

**WOODY PLANTS**

**Tree Peonies**

*Ideal Conditions for Planting*

Tree or “woody” Peonies prefer a sunny to partially sunny location. They welcome some shade from the intense afternoon sun. We recommend a location in full sun to 1/3 shade. Rich, loose, well-drained soil is ideal for allowing the tree peonies to develop deep roots and perform to their full potential for many years. The soil should be well tilled prior to planting. It is best to cultivate and mix compost a foot deep before planting. Dig a hole 2’ deep and 2’ wide and plant the tree peony so that the soil level of the containerized plant is level with the ground. We recommend planting Tree Peonies with 3’-6’ of space between each plant. Late fall plantings in colder climates should be mulched.

*Maintenance and Care*

A tree peony should not be cut back to the ground in the fall. They are woody plants and develop into small shrubs. Remove winter damaged or broken branches in early spring prior to the new growth period. Internal thinning of crowded central minor branching is also advised on older plants. Once established, tree peonies are extremely hardy and tolerate heat and humidity. Light applications of rose food in spring and again in summer should be adequate to keep tree peonies looking their best. Be careful not to overdo a good thing by fertilizing too much. Like the herbaceous peony, sanitation is the best control for disease in tree peonies. Careful inspection of the plants and removal of any infected parts is important. Although mulching is beneficial in over-wintering for the first few seasons, it also provides habitat for the botrytis fungus. Pull mulch away from the plant early in the spring as the ground thaws and before new growth begins.

**General Care of Deciduous Shrubs and Trees**

*Ideal Conditions for Planting for Deciduous Shrubs and Trees*

Shrubs and trees grown in containers may be planted almost year round, although cool temperatures in spring and fall can be helpful when establishing new plants. Before planting, prepare soil with sufficient organic matter, such as leaf mold, well decomposed manure or compost; it will improve aeration, drainage, and soil fertility. Good drainage is critical with most plants. The area of prepared soil should be three times wider and twice as deep as the size of the root ball. Prior to planting, make sure that the root ball has been well watered and given time to soak in before removing from the container. This reduces the possibility of
physical damage and drought stress. Roots should be gently loosened from the original soil ball, especially if they are dense and tightly intertwined. The top of the soil ball should be at the level of the surrounding ground. Work the prepared soil back in around the roots and soil ball, then firm the backfilled soil gently. Follow with a generous watering to ensure good root to soil contact. After planting, a 3”-4” organic mulch will provide moisture conservation, weed suppression, and buffer extreme fluctuations in soil temperature. Keep mulch 2” away from the trunks of trees. Make certain that plants receive adequate moisture throughout the first growing season and remove weeds that compete for water.

*Pruning of Deciduous Shrubs*

Prune for two main results. First, formative pruning helps maintain a desired size and shape. Second, it can enhance ornamental factors such as flowering and subsequent fruit production. Pruning shrubs should be done according to when the shrub blooms. Shrubs that bloom from flower buds developed during the previous season should be pruned immediately after flowering to allow time for growth and the development of the next year’s flower buds (these are generally early blooming shrubs). Shrubs that primarily bloom from flower buds developed during the current season should be pruned in late winter or very early spring to allow growth of new wood and flower buds in spring for summer blooms (these are generally later blooming shrubs). If you are not sure which group your shrub belongs to, trim it immediately after it blooms. Pruning to thin out crowded branches can be done during the dormant season when it is easier to see the structure. Plan ahead to allow space for a shrub to mature; trimming should be used to gently shape a plant, not to try to fit a large shrub into a small space.

*Pruning and Staking of Deciduous Trees*

Staking young trees helps protect against physical damage and as an aid for formative training. Drive a strong 3’-4’ stake into the ground 8”-10” from the trunk on the side of the tree from which the strongest winds blow. Tie the trunk to this stake in at least two places 18”-24” apart with manufactured tree ties, soft twine, tape, or wire inserted through a rubber hose. Limit pruning at planting time to removing of broken or crossed branches. In future years, prune in winter or early spring before growth begins. Remove crossed branches and any sucker growth arising from roots or stems of understock. Trim to shape the tree by carefully removing unwanted branches. Prune them back to a bud, branch or even main trunks, leave the collar (the ridged border where one branch meets another branch), but avoid leaving stubs. Allow space for trees to grow, so that drastic pruning is not needed. Remove dead or broken branches promptly, at any time of the year.

*Acer (Japanese Maples)*

*Ideal Conditions for Planting*

Generally speaking the Maples we offer will tolerate a variety of soil types and pH levels. We recommend locations of sun through partial shade. The *Acer palmatum* and *A. tegmentosum* prefer protection from harsh winter winds and some shading from hot, direct, midsummer sun. *Acer miyabei* does very well in full sun and seems to be very tolerant of winter conditions. All the Maples tend to prefer well-drained soils. Dig a hole 2-3 times larger than the root ball. If the soil is of poor quality you may amend the soil with compost or leaf mold, being careful never to add more than 50% of amendments to the existing soil. Plant
the tree slightly higher than the level ground and press down firmly on backfilled soil. Water thoroughly and mulch the planting with shredded hardwood mulch to a depth of about 2”. Remember to keep the mulch at least 2” away from the trunk of the tree.

**Maintenance and Care**

A light application of a balanced, slow-release fertilizer can be added each spring.

**Cornus (Dogwood)**

*Ideal Conditions for Planting*

Generally easy to grow, Cornus do well in either an open sunny location or partial shade. A well drained, moisture retentive, acid, organic soil is normally ideal. Never allow the plants to dry out, especially younger specimens.

**Maintenance and Care**

Formative pruning is usually sufficient for the tree forms, while many of the low growing shrubby types, grown especially for their spectacular winter bark coloring, should be pruned back hard in early spring before new growth starts. This encourages the proliferation of young vigorous shoots which produce the most intense coloration the following winter.

**Hydrangea**

*Ideal Conditions for Planting*

Plant in spring, summer, or fall in a rich, well drained, moisture retentive organic soil. Ample moisture should always be available to the shallow roots. An organic mulch is beneficial in maintaining moisture levels. Select a sunny or partially shaded location. Shade becomes a more critical factor further south, where some afternoon shade will be helpful. Flower color of the widely grown H. macrophylla and its many selections is determined by soil pH, alkaline conditions (pH 7 and above) result in pink flowers, and acid conditions (pH below 6.5) result in blue flowers. Alkaline soils can be acidified by small applications of ammonium sulfate, aluminum sulfate, or soil sulfur.

**Maintenance and Care**

Give Hydrangea formative pruning to help maintain the desired size and shape.

Many species of Hydrangea (H. quercifolia, H. arborescens and H. paniculata) produce flowers on the current season’s growth, so pruning should be done before plants start growing in the spring. Do this by cutting the previous year’s flowering wood back by half.

H. macrophylla forms its flowers on growth produced during the previous year so pruning, when required, should be done immediately after flowering. On established shrubs, thin out 2-to 3-year-old flowering shoots by cutting them back to ground level to promote vigorous new growth. In northern areas, mulching around the basal stem buds of H. macrophylla will provide some protection from cold winter temperatures.

The climbing Hydrangea, H. anomala petiolaris, should be pruned only for aesthetic purposes, gently guiding the growth.
Magnolia

Ideal Conditions for Planting

Magnolias prefer full sun to partial shade and will benefit from some wind protection as gusty winds may damage tree branches, leaves and flowers. The ideal soil is well-drained and high in organic matter with a pH of 5.5-6.5. We recommend a spacing of 20’-25’ between plants. When ready to plant, dig a hole at least twice the size of the root ball in order to allow plenty of room for the Magnolia's surface feeding roots to develop. Magnolias have soft, fleshy roots that are easily damaged and care must be taken when planting to avoid breaking the roots. Anchor the plant with a stake until it is well established to prevent it from being blown over.

Maintenance and Care

After planting, Magnolias can be lightly fertilized with an all-purpose garden fertilizer. We recommend that mulch be applied at this time in order to retain moisture and discourage weed growth. Mulch around the root zone, staying approximately 2” away from the tree's trunk. Digging or hoeing around these plants is not advisable since surface roots are easily damaged. Fertilizer should not be placed near the trunk itself but at a distance roughly equal to the drip line or edge of the branch canopy.

Syringa (Lilacs)

Ideal Conditions for Planting

Lilacs prefer an open sunny location with good air circulation. Soils should be well drained with ample levels of organic matter to ensure moisture retention. They are shallow rooted and mulching with compost, shredded hardwood bark, or other organic matter is preferable to cultivating around the plant.

Maintenance and Care

A yearly application in spring of rose food, bone meal, or 5-10-5 fertilizer will help promote flowering. Prune off old flower clusters shortly after blooming. Flower buds are formed on the previous season’s wood, so pruning should be done just after flowering to avoid cutting off the next season’s flowers. Old plants can be rejuvenated by cutting back all old, thick branches to ground level in early spring which will encourage new, vigorous, replacement growth. After pruning to rejuvenate, mulch, fertilize, and water well.

Viburnum

Ideal Conditions for Planting

Plant in spring, summer, or fall in sunny or partially shaded locations. Viburnum thrives in rich, deep, well drained, but moisture retentive soils. Many species are tolerant of drought once they become established, and can thrive in polluted urban environments.

Maintenance and Care

These easily grown shrubs require minimal maintenance. Pruning to shape them can be done after blooming; if they are fruiting varieties, then pruning should be done after fruit display is finished.
EVERGREENS AND CONIFERS

Ideal Conditions for Planting

Evergreens grown in containers may be planted almost year round, although the cooler spring and fall seasons are preferable. Planting in well prepared soil with excellent drainage is imperative for all conifers. Roots should be teased or loosened from the original soil ball, especially if they are dense and tightly intertwined. The planting hole must be large enough to accommodate the entire root system. The top of the soil ball should then be placed at or just below the soil level. Backfill the prepared soil around the roots and soil ball, gently firming the new soil, followed by a generous watering to ensure good root to soil contact. After planting, a 3”-4” organic mulch will aid in both moisture conservation and buffer extreme fluctuations of soil temperature. Ensure that newly planted specimens receive adequate moisture throughout their first growing season and remove weeds since they can crowd new plants and compete for water.

Maintenance and Care

Pruning conifers is strictly formative by nature and done to maintain or achieve a desired size or particular shape, and can be carried out year round, avoiding only the most severe winter conditions. Allow sufficient space for growth when planting a new evergreen or conifer.

Need something to complete your new planting?

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