

Maianthemum dilatatum



Doubling Down on Delight: Propagating Your False Lily of the Valley

The "False Lily of the Valley," also known as *Maianthemum dilatatum*, is a charming woodland groundcover adored for its heart-shaped leaves and delicate white flower plumes. If you're lucky enough to have this Pacific Northwest native gracing your garden, you're probably eager to learn how to multiply your good fortune. Thankfully, propagating *Maianthemum dilatatum* is a relatively straightforward process, achievable through division or seed. Let's dig into both methods:

Division: The Easier Route to Propagation

For the most effortless and quickest results, division is the way to go. Here's how to do it:

- 1. Timing is Everything:** Early spring, just before new growth emerges, is the ideal time to divide established *Maianthemum dilatatum* clumps.
- 2. Gentle Removal:** Using a garden fork, carefully lift a

section of the plant from the ground. Ensure you get a good root mass attached.

3. **Division Decisions:** You can divide the clump into smaller sections, each with healthy roots and shoots. A sharp, clean knife or garden shears work best for this.
4. **Replanting:** Replant the divisions at the same depth they were originally growing, spacing them about 12-18 inches apart. Water thoroughly and keep the soil consistently moist until established.

Seed Propagation: A Test of Patience

While slightly more time-consuming, propagating *Maianthemum dilatatum* from seed offers a unique sense of accomplishment.

1. **Seed Collection:** In late summer or early fall, collect the small, reddish berries produced after the flowers fade. Extract the seeds and clean off any pulp.
2. **Cold Stratification:** To mimic natural conditions, *Maianthemum dilatatum* seeds require cold stratification. Place the seeds in a sealed bag with moist vermiculite or sand and store them in the refrigerator (around 40°F) for 6-8 weeks.
3. **Sowing Time:** Once stratified, sow the seeds in seed trays filled with a well-draining seed starting mix. Gently press the seeds onto the surface, but don't bury them.
4. **Patience is Key:** Keep the soil consistently moist and place the tray in a bright location, out of direct sunlight. Germination can take several weeks to a few months.
5. **Transplantation:** Once the seedlings develop a few sets of true leaves and are large enough to handle, transplant them into individual pots or directly into

the garden.

Tips for Success:

- **Well-Drained Soil is Key:** *Maianthemum dilatatum* thrives in organically rich, well-drained soil that retains moisture.
- **Partial Shade is Ideal:** While tolerant of full shade, dappled shade or morning sun with afternoon shade will result in the healthiest plants.
- **Water Wisely:** Keep the soil consistently moist, especially during the first growing season. Avoid overwatering, which can lead to root rot.

By following these simple steps and arming yourself with a bit of patience, you'll soon be enjoying a tapestry of delicate beauty as your propagated *Maianthemum dilatatum* spreads its charm throughout your garden.