



The Community Horticulture Program of
BROOKLYN BOTANIC GARDEN

TREE PIT PLANTING

Choosing Plants

When deciding which plants to use in a tree pit, consider these tips:

- Annuals, perennials, and bulbs can be beautiful additions to a tree pit *as long as you remember that the tree's health comes first.*
- Use small plants and bulbs. Large plants require large planting holes, which damage tree roots, and plants with large root systems compete with the tree for water and nutrients.
- Select plants that can take abuse. A tree pit is a harsh environment, and plants need to be tough to survive.
- Choose plants with low water requirements. Phrases like “drought tolerant” and “good for xeriscaping” tell you that a plant doesn't need much water.
- Dig carefully with a cultivator or trowel, and choose a new spot if you encounter tree roots over 1 inch in diameter. Using a shovel or spade increases your chances of injuring the tree's roots.
- Don't raise the tree pit's soil level when you plant.
- Install a tree guard to protect plants and tree roots.

Plants for Sun (also good for *newly planted trees*)

Annuals:

Centaurea cineraria (dusty miller)
Helichrysum petiolare (licorice plant)
Portulaca species (moss rose)
Tagetes species (marigold)
Tropaeolum species (nasturtium)
Verbena species
Zinnia species—especially *Z. angustifolia*

Perennials:

Cerastium tomentosum (snow-in-summer)
Liriope muscari (lilyturf)
Oenothera fruticosa (sundrops)
Sedum species—groundcover types
Thymus serpyllum (wild thyme)

Plants for Shade (also good for *established trees*)

Annuals:

Begonia species
Impatiens species
Lobelia species
Solenostemon scutellarioides (coleus)
Viola species (pansy)

Perennials:

Bergenia cordifolia (Siberian tea)
Heuchera species (coral bell)
Hosta species—small species only
Lamium maculatum (spotted deadnettle)
Liriope muscari (lilyturf)

Bulbs

Because street trees lack leaves in early spring, spring bulbs—which generally prefer at least a half-day of sun—are easily grown in sunny pits before the tree leaves out.

Crocus species
Chionodoxa species (glory-of-the-snow)
Narcissus species (daffodil)
Eranthis hyemalis (winter aconite)
Galanthus nivalis (snowdrop)

Hyacinthoides hispanica (bluebells)—best in shade
Convallaria majalis (lily-of-the-valley)
Muscari species (grape hyacinth)
Species (as opposed to hybrid) tulips