

TREE PIT GARDENING WORKSHOP



This workshop was made possible through a partnership with the Village of Cold Spring, the Cold Spring Area Chamber of Commerce and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Urban & Community Forestry

Handout prepared by
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TREE PIT GARDENING

QUICK START GUIDE



SPRING

Handout prepared by
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1. INVESTIGATE SITE CONDITIONS AT THE TREE PIT

Assess amount of sunlight—full sun, part sun, full shade

Use small trowel or fork to gently explore 6-8" below grade in a few spots around the tree to see if fibrous roots are present or if there are pockets of plantable areas

Do NOT cut or rip or damage roots. Find open pockets for potential planting.

Notice quality of soil. Rocky? Dense clay? Sand/gravel?

Soil PH

2. LOCATE WATER SOURCE AND MAKE A WATERING PLAN

How will you provide weekly water to this site until it is established?

This is the MOST FORGOTTEN step! Make this plan in advance!

3. PREPARE SITE

Remove any large rocks and trash (gravel and some stones are ok)

Amend soil with small amount of compost if needed—work in by hand to prevent root damage.

DO NOT add compost that will raise the mulch line above the trunk flare of the tree. Instead gently remove pockets of poor soil and replace with a mix of soil/compost.

If site has VERY fibrous roots with no planting pockets, DO NOT remove roots to plant. Instead use above-grade pots/planters with trailing annuals set around the base of the tree. Ensure pots are large enough to hold water and use "soil moist" or another organic water-absorbing crystal polymer mixed in with the potting soil to lessen drought pressure on above grade pots.

4. CHOOSE TOUGH AND TREE-FRIENDLY PLANTS

See CS Village handout "Recommended Tree Pit Plantings" for suggestions

Be as creative as you'd like!

Be hopeful, but don't be too attached to what you plant. Urban pressures (dog pee, foot traffic, car tires and doors, road and sidewalk salt and chemicals, disease and drought) beyond your control will challenge your planting and some won't make it!

Assume the mindset of a benefactor, not an owner. Tree pit gardeners donate to the village their plant stock and volunteer hours maintaining tree garden sites for the benefit of their adjacent property or business, their neighbors and the wider community. Please note that anything planted in the ground on village property becomes the full property of the village and can be removed at any time without notice. In practice, as a courtesy the village tries its best to locate and notify apparent gardeners if plants need to be removed (for work on sidewalk for example or for safety reasons).

SPRING, cont...

5. **PLANT PIT USING THE VILLAGE'S "GUIDELINES FOR VILLAGE TREE PITS" (DON'T FORGET TO WATER-IN YOUR NEW PLANTINGS)**
6. **ADD 2-3 INCHES of MULCH & WATER AS NEEDED DEPENDING ON SPRING WEATHER**

Choose amount of mulch that will NOT raise the mulch line above the trunk flare of the tree. Keep mulch away from the trunk.

Check weekly for watering—Let top inches of soil dry out between waterings and skip water if it has been a rainy week.

SUMMER

7. **WATER WEEKLY (OR MORE FREQUENTLY DURING DROUGHT/HEAT) UNTIL ESTABLISHED, THEN REDUCE WATERING FREQUENCY.**
8. **REMOVE COMPETING WEEDS BY HAND AS NEEDED THROUGHOUT THE SEASON**

FALL

9. **FALL ANNUALS & LEAF CLEANUP**

Clip back perennials in late fall to keep them neat or leave them to self-seed if preferred! Seed heads left alone can provide winter structure and interest.

Add small fall annuals for color if desired—but avoid adding larger size plants with rootballs that are difficult to place in between roots. If you love the look of large mums in the fall, stagger pots above ground around the tree pit between your summer plantings (but remember to water pots!).

Fall is a good time to find markdowns on perennial stock and a great time to plant any perennials lost during the season! Look to make additions of hardy plants to your tree pit garden that you'll enjoy next season.

WINTER

10. **WINTER INTEREST & COVER**

- Protect your perennial plantings over the winter by leaving some fallen leaves in the pit as a cover layer in the fall. Remove these in spring when plants break dormancy.
- In mid-winter, fresh evergreen boughs laid loosely on top of the soil make a nice festive cover for bare tree pits where annuals have died away. Remove these in the spring before perennials wake up.

GOOD TO REMEMBER:

Tree Pit Gardening is an exercise in hope and perseverance against the odds. It requires a fair bit of resilience! Don't sweat it if you lose some plants. Learn from the losses and keep trying until you find some combination that works for the site and your time commitment level.

The image features a background of green and white geometric shapes. A large white diagonal line runs from the top left towards the center. To the right, there are several horizontal white lines of varying lengths, creating a stepped or staircase-like effect. In the lower-left and central areas, there is a white line-art illustration of a crowd of people, with some figures holding up what appear to be phones or cameras. The word "ATTACHMENTS" is written in a bold, orange, sans-serif font, centered horizontally and partially overlapping the white geometric shapes.

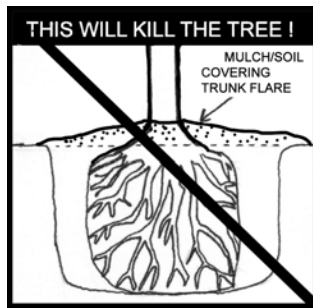
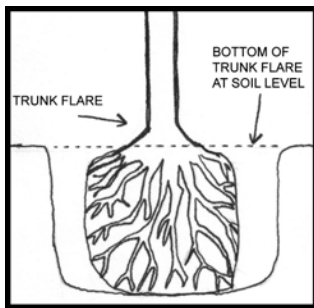
ATTACHMENTS

PLANTING GUIDELINES FOR VILLAGE TREE PITS

Thank you for caring about our community and helping beautify our streets. Your work is inspiring! Here are a few tips that will help ensure the success of your planting and the health of the neighboring tree.

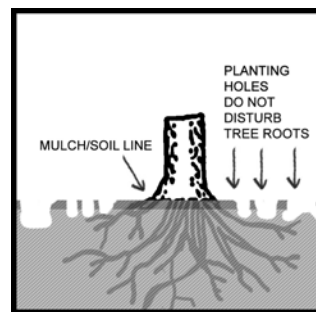
1. DON'T BURY TRUNK FLARE.

Adding mulch or soil that is touching the tree trunk is a common killer of Cold Spring trees. Burying the trunk flare (the slightly thicker part of the trunk base where the topmost main roots adjoin the trunk) will cause girdling root growth that will eventually kill the tree.



2. DON'T CUT OR DISTURB TREE ROOTS OR USE HERBICIDES.

Our street trees already struggle to survive in their hot small tree-pits. Damage to roots caused by herbicides or cutting them will make the tree struggle even more and will shorten its life-span. **If tree roots are too large/prolific, consider using large pots as planters set around the tree base!**



3. PLEASE AVOID THESE PLANTS:

We all love creativity and appreciate your volunteer time to plant and care for a public tree pit. Thank you! Please avoid these plants that make Highway staff and other tree volunteers' work much harder. These plants will likely be removed.

- VERY TALL PLANTS (impede curbside access, parking)
- VINES (will attach to tree trunks/canopy and compete with tree)
- SHRUBS (root structure will compete with tree)
- EVERGREENS
- PACHYSANDRA or IVY
- DAYLILLIES or HIGHLY INVASIVE SPECIES

4. PLEASE CHOOSE LOWER GROWING DROUGHT AND SALT TOLERANT PLANTS.

Plantings need to get along with community use of the street, must survive winter road/sidewalk salt runoff, drought and dog pee. Plants that survive in these conditions will be those tough plants that don't impede curbside parking or pedestrians. A list of Recommended Plantings can be found on the next page.

RECOMMENDED TREE PIT PLANTINGS

Feel free to experiment, but below are tough plantings of appropriate stature and tolerances, needing little care, that are suggested for tree pit sites in mostly sun. Those perennials in bold have survived Cold Spring streetside conditions at multiple different sites for multiple winters in a row. Please note: none of these suggestions are guaranteed to grow! Survival entirely depends on specific site conditions and care.

PERENNIALS

YARROW

Achillea millefolium 'Pretty Belinda'

SPURGE

Euphorbia 'Ascot Rainbow'

CATMINT

Nepeta x faassenii 'Kit Cat'

Nepeta x faassenii 'Purrsian Blue'

Nepeta x faassenii 'Little Trudy'

Nepeta x 'Walker's Low'

MOUNTAIN MINT

Pycnanthemum

RUSSIAN SAGE

Perovskia atriplicifolia 'Little Spire'

ECHINACEA

Echinacea purpurea

Echinacea purpurea 'Magnus'

BLACK EYED SUSAN

Rudbeckia 'City Garden'

SEDUM

Sedum 'Abbeydore'

COREOPSIS

Coreopsis 'Moonbeam', 'Zagreb', 'Crème Caramel'

ANEMONE

Anemone x hybrid 'September Charm'

GROUNDCOVER

Lysimachia nummularia 'Goldilocks'

Phlox subulata 'Red Wings'

Rubus calycinoides 'Emerald Carpet'

Gaylussacia brachycerra

Ajuga reptans

GRASS-LIKE PLANTS

Festuca glauca 'Elijah Blue'

Miscanthus sinensis 'Little Kitten'

Koeleria glauca 'Coolio'

Carex elata 'Aurea'

Carex morrowii 'Ice Dance'

Carex vulpinoides

TUBERS/BULBS

SIBERIAN IRISES

CROCUS

NARCISSUS

SNOW DROPS

MUSCARI

ANNUALS

NEW GUINEA IMPATIENS

WAX BEGONIA

AGERATUM

LANTANA

GERANIUM

NASTURTIUM

VERBENA

COSMOS

ROCK ROSE

MARIGOLDS

BEST FOR SHADY SITES

PERENNIALS

Carex pennsylvanica

Tiarella cordifolia

Heuchera

Lamium

ANNUALS

Impatiens

Lobelia

Pansy

Fuchsia

Viola

Coleus

Begonia

AGENDA

TREE PIT GARDENING WORKSHOP

May 10, 2019

- 9:30 Arrivals
- 9:35 Welcome by Cold Spring Area Chamber of Commerce President Eliza Starbuck and Village of Cold Spring Tree Advisory Board Chairperson Jennifer Zwarich.
- 9:45 Remarks by Charles Day, Ruth Rea Howell Horticultural Interpreter at Wave Hill Public Gardens, Bronx NY.
- 10:00 Guided walking tour of example tree pits on Main Street with comments by Mr. Day, Master Gardener and landscape professional Tony Bardes and garden educator Kory Riesterer.
- 10:30 Tree Pit gardening tutorial and Q&A in front of Village Hall, 85 Main Street
- 11:00 Departures