

Concord Parks and Recreation Department

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TIPS ON HOW TO GET STARTED ON YOUR

ADOPT-A-SPOT

Planting Concerns

The following tips are provided for the best possible outcome of planted spots around Concord. All adopters should be aware of site maintenance and the needs of particular plants and shrubs installed.

1. Site Evaluation. The following steps should be done prior to any planting. All steps are not required but they are important for longevity of the plantings. Less maintenance and better results overall is the benefit of their completion.

- Determine the amount of sunlight the site receives (full sun, partial shade or shade) so that the appropriate types of plants can be purchased. Ask for assistance at the greenhouse where your plants are purchased-they are familiar with these issues.
- Find the nearest source for water-consider the effort required to keep plants watered. This is of primary importance for newly planted sites, which should be watered several times a week to get established.
- Evaluate the exposure to wind, road salt and other environmental conditions.
- Evaluate safe sight lines for traffic concerns when choosing plant material, notice growth habit and maturity of plants.
- Check the quality of the soil where you are going to be planting. Ask greenhouse staff to help determine what soil amendments are needed.

2. Site Preparation

Note: Preparing and amending the soil is essential for a successful planting...Plants need soil, water, air, and nutrients to thrive!

- Rid site of all weeds and litter.
- Add soil amendments as recommended by greenhouse staff. This could include **peat** to build up water retention in the soil, composted **manure** to build up organic material, or small amounts of **sand** to improve aeration.
- Add water-retentive colloids, a commercial substance that holds water over long periods, to increase moisture retention.
- Double-dig the soil to mix in the amendments and make sure the soil is not compacted.

Notes on double digging:

Double digging prepares a flowerbed deeply. Thorough loosening of the soil and subsoil, together with adding amendments, helps keep plants blooming and in good health and also improves aeration. This only needs to be done once, before any plants go in.

Use a spading fork and a spade (straight, not curved shovel). With the spade, dig a straight-sided trench as deep as the spade and two feet wide. Remove the soil from this trench and set aside. With the spading fork, loosen the subsoil about 12 inches (the depth of the fork). Mix in rotted manure or compost. When you've finished, the area will be slightly higher than before, but in time it will settle back down.

3. Site Design (Use Native Plants)

- If a prospective participant wants to plant in an area where others have done work in the past (and that has been abandoned or is no longer being maintained), the best efforts should be made to continue or improve upon what the previous participants have accomplished.
- Incorporate drought-and salt-tolerant plants in your design that are hardy to zone 4-5 or below to survive the harsh conditions often presented by weather extremes or traffic areas.
- Incorporate pollinator and wildlife-supporting plants. These planting areas are often the only place of refuge in an urban area, create a space that supports as many species of birds and insects.
- Use a thoughtful color palette (two to three colors) in areas of high visibility-not too distracting, but enough to show a visible change in the streetscape.
- Choose plants for continuous flowering and foliage interest over the four seasons. For early spring choose bulbs such as daffodils, grape hyacinth, and tulip species. Annuals, perennials, grasses and flowering shrubs can provide various blooming periods from spring to winter, with seed heads or branch color and form providing winter interest.
- Perennial plants are the preferred plants to use at public sites. They will come up year after year, thus limiting plant and maintenance costs. Perennials require deep and well-drained beds with no more than 10% organic materials, and some fertilization and/or mulching.
- Annuals require more care than perennials. Used as filler plants with perennials, they supply additional color and interest. Annuals typically require a soil depth of 18 inches.
- Grasses and ground covers also add additional texture and interest.
- Spring blooming bulbs need to be planted in late fall.
- Minimize areas covered only with mulch.
- City policy dictates that no edible plants are allowed.
- Traffic concerns limit plant heights to 24 inches. There must be clear space for driver lines of sight up to six feet (limiting the lower branches of trees.)

4. Maintenance

- Plantings must be kept healthy and in good condition.
- Watering must be done in a safe and timely manner. No watering should take place in times of heavy traffic around the adopted spots where a person may be at risk of injury.
- Deadheading of spent blooms, which is, cutting them off just after flowering to prevent seed formation (which takes the plant's energy), to encourage additional flowering is recommended. This maintenance step is ongoing.
- Fertilizer and Bulb Booster should be added as recommended.
- In late fall the site needs to be "put to bed." Plants (except for ornamental grasses) should be cut back and covered with a light layer of salt marsh hay after the first frost. This prevents some garbage accumulation on the plants and keeps the site looking tidy.
- Perennials may need dividing over time. Check a book on perennials for directions on doing this. It will give you more plants!

5. Planting and Design Ideas

(plants with an * indicate pollinator and wildlife friendly species)

Groundcovers:

Good for sun or shade

- Bugle or Bugleweed (*Ajuga reptans*)
- Myrtle or Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*)
- Pachysandra (*Pachysandra*)
- Barren strawberry (*Waldsteinia*)*
- Bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*)*

Prefers full sun

- Ground Phlox (*Phlox subulata*)*
- Stonecrop (*Sedum*)-Plant around low stones for a rock garden effect*

Bulbs:

- Crocus, Daffodils, Tulips, Alliums, and many others are great for spring color.

Annuals:

Shade-loving annuals

- Impatiens, Coleus, Wax begonias, Browallia

Sun-loving annuals

- Marigolds, Pansies, Petunias, Geraniums, Portulaca, Nasturtiums, Salvia, Verbena

Perennials:

Shade or partial-sun perennials

- Hosta (many sizes, shapes and colors-mix to create contrast and texture or mass a single variety)
- Daylillies (many varieties-a popular, low-growing, long-flowering one is *Stella D'Oro*)
- Columbine (*Aquilegia*)*
- Cranesbill (*Geranium 'Johnson's Blue'* and others)
- Primrose (*Primula*)
- Virginia bluebell (*Mertensia virginica*)*

Full-sun perennials

- Ornamental Grasses-Choose low-growing varieties
- Sedum Autumn Joy*
- Yarrow (*Achillea*)
- Black-Eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia*)*
- Meadow Sage (*Salvia*)*
- Cone flower (*Echinacea*)*
- False Indigo (*Baptisia*)*
- Candytuft (*Iberis*)
- Coreopsis*
- Shasta Daisy (*Chrysanthemum maximum*)
- Asters (*Aster*)*
- Beebalm (*Monarda*)*
- Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)*

Shrubs:

Evergreen

- Juniper (*Juniperus 'Sargent'* and *'Seagreen'*)
- Holly (*Ilex crenata* and *Ilex 'China Girl'*)
- Yew (*Taxus 'Green Wave'*)

Deciduous

- Ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*)*
- New Jersey Tea (*Ceanotus americanus*)*
- Shrub Roses (*Rosa 'Betty Prior'*, *'Bonica'*, *'The Fairy'*, *'Magic Carpet'*, and *'Red Ribbons'*)
- Little Henry Sweetspire (*Itea virginica*)*