

Tips from the Field: Top Ten DOs and DONTs for Urban Tree Planting

DO:

1. Plan ahead prior to the planting date to ensure necessary permissions are obtained (e.g., Miss Utility, permits, property owner permission, community buy-in), trees and other materials are ordered and proper storage provided, the site is prepared, and volunteers are trained and ready, and develop a budget that includes all these items.
2. Develop a plan for tree maintenance that outlines the 'who, what, when and where' of maintenance (e.g., watering, mulching, removing stakes and tree shelters, invasive species control, inspections)
3. Consider potential site conflicts with tree planting (e.g., vandalism, lack of space for large mature trees, no water source) and pick a different site if there are major issues
4. Establish partnerships to assist with planting and maintenance and involve them from the very beginning (e.g., fire department to assist with watering, school groups and citizen groups to help out with maintenance)
5. Select species appropriate for the site's climate, soils, exposure, and environmental conditions
6. Test and improve the site soils before planting if needed
7. Plan for invasive plant management – this may include weeding, mowing, mulching or other methods
8. Have experts on hand during planting day to provide training to volunteers on proper planting techniques
9. Water trees – use gator bags – should be watered at least once a week during the first growing season and during dry periods after that
10. Protect trees from mowers and weed whackers using mulch and weed whacker guards

DON'T:

1. Wait until the last minute to order trees from the nursery – allow plenty of lead time
2. Plant in the wrong season - Spring and Fall are best, depending on the type of stock you select
3. Plant all the same species – diversify so your entire planting project will not be wiped out in case of disease or insect infestation
4. Plant too far apart – choose a layout (e.g., no greater than 50 foot spacing) that will result in some canopy closure
5. Forget to call the local utility hotline (e.g., Miss Utility) or department responsible for locating utilities
6. Plant the tree too deep – the root collar of the tree should be exposed when planted
7. Leave the container, wiring, or string on the root ball when planting
8. Stake improperly or leave stakes on too long – if stakes are needed, use flexible ties that will not girdle the tree and remove after one year
9. Pile up mulch in a volcano around the tree trunk – a few inches of mulch is adequate and mulch should be kept away from the trunk to avoid rot and insect infestation.
10. Forget to water!

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