

Plants for Tree Beds



Annuals, perennials, and bulbs can be beautiful additions to a tree bed, as long as you remember that **the tree's health comes first**. Here are some tips:

- Never raise the soil level when you install other plants—this can rot the bark at the base of the tree.
- Use small plants and bulbs—large plants require deeper holes that can damage tree roots and often have large root systems that compete with the tree for water and nutrients.
- Choose plants with low water requirements. Plant tags and catalog descriptions that say “drought tolerant” and “good for xeriscaping” tell you that a plant doesn’t need much water.
- Select plants that can take abuse. A tree bed is a harsh environment, but tough plants can survive.
- Install a tree guard to protect the bed. See nycgovparks.org/trees/tree-care/tree-guards

Plants for Sun

These choices are best beneath newly planted trees.

Annuals

Dusty miller (*Senecio cineraria*)
Marigold (*Tagetes* species)
Nasturtium (*Tropaeolum* species)
Rock rose (*Portulaca* species)
Verbena (*Verbena* × *hybrida*)
Zinnia (*Zinnia angustifolia*)

Perennials

Snow-in-summer (*Cerastium tomentosum*)
Oxeye daisy (*Chrysanthemum vulgare*)
Lilyturf (*Liriope muscari*)
Sundrops (*Oenothera fruticosa*)
Stonecrop (*Sedum* species)
Wild thyme (*Thymus serpyllum*)

Plants for Shade

These choices are best beneath established trees.

Annuals

Begonia (*Begonia* × *semperflorens*)
Coleus (*Solenostemon scutellarioides*)
Impatiens (*Impatiens walleriana*)
Lobelia (*Lobelia erinus*)
Pansy (*Viola tricolor*, some are winter hardy)

Perennials

Heart-leaved bergenia (*Bergenia cordifolia*)
Spotted deadnettle (*Lamium maculatum*)
Lilyturf (*Liriope muscari*)
Coral bells (*Heuchera* species)
Wild Geranium (*Geranium maculatum*)

Spring Bulbs

Most spring bulbs like at least half a day of sun. Since they bloom before deciduous trees fully leaf out, these bulbs will even thrive in the beds of established trees.

Crocus (*Crocus* species)

Lily-of-the-valley (*Convallaria majalis*)

Snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*)

Glory-of-the-snow (*Chinodoxa* species)

Grape hyacinth (*Muscari* species)

Daffodil (*Narcissus* species)

Species tulips (*Tulipa* species)

Winter aconite (*Eranthis hyemalis*)