

# 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 new 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: Choose tough plants that can survive and thrive.
- Install a tree guard to protect the bed. See [stewardship.nycparks.org/library/treeguard.php](http://stewardship.nycparks.org/library/treeguard.php).

## Plants for Sun

These choices are best beneath newly planted trees.

### Annuals

Dusty miller (*Senecio cineraria*)  
Licorice plant (*Helichrysum petiolare*)  
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*)  
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

Elephant's ears (*Bergenia cordifolia*)  
Spotted deadnettle (*Lamium maculatum*)  
Lilyturf (*Liriope muscari*)  
Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*)

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## 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 thrive in the beds of even established trees.

Crocus (*Crocus* species)

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

Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides hispanica*) (best in shade)

Snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*)

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

Grape hyacinth (*Muscari* species)

Daffodil (*Narcissus* species)

Species tulips (*Tulipa* species)

Winter aconite (*Eranthis hyemalis*)