



Chorlton Plant Swap

Spruce up your tree pit



A guide to planting around street trees

This leaflet has been compiled to guide and enthuse you to plant around 'tree pits' in residential areas. You'll find advice on what to grow and how to take care of your plants, as well as a few pitfalls and health & safety matters.

Find Chorlton Plant Swap online at:

[www.facebook.com/groups/
Chorltonplantswap](https://www.facebook.com/groups/Chorltonplantswap)

Ideas for planting



“Small is beautiful” is a good starting point as you don’t want plants to outgrow the tree pit or compete with the actual tree for soil and water. Need to know more about plants? Check out the recommended websites overleaf for more information and photos.

Around the year colour and performance

In the Spring and Summer, plant out bedding plants such as marigolds, nasturtiums, cornflower, love-in-the-mist or petunias. You can grow these from seed or buy plants from nurseries.

Hardy perennial plants like geraniums, available in pinks, blues and white should fare well. Forget-Me-Nots will do well and spread. For a tall plant that doesn’t need staking and copes with shallow soil, try verbena bonariensis. It will seed for more plants the next year.

Into wildlife gardening? Chuck in some wildflower seeds to attract insects. How lovely would some bright red poppies look?

Sedum should do quite well, looking colourful well into the Autumn. For more Autumn colour, try some bulbs such as cyclamen.

In the Autumn, plant up early Spring-flowering bulbs such as snowdrops, muscari, crocuses or miniature daffodils.

During the Winter, pansies and primulas will add colour and require little maintenance.

Fancy something fragrant? Plant some lawn camomile or creeping thyme.

You could theme your tree pit, for example trying different colour schemes. You might like to link up with your neighbours—a street in Chorlton planted World Cup themed colours.

Do use the metal tree guard for growing climbers like sweet-peas or morning glory, but be warned, they can suddenly be removed by the Council when the growing tree is deemed not to need protection.

Shady space under that tree? Try busy lizzies, begonias, foxgloves, wood anemones or Japanese anemones.

Combining daffodils and muscari for Spring colour



Hints & Tips

Before you start Add extra compost as the pit is likely to be quite shallow and have poor soil. Pull out any stones, weeds or other rubbish. Be careful not to damage the tree roots whilst you do this.

- ☼ Stick to plants that don't need deep soil, are inexpensive to replace, or not too delicate to cope with the occasional attention of passersby.
- ☼ Different plants will suit different stages of the tree's life. Smaller, younger trees will create less shade, whilst larger trees will need to have more shade-tolerant plants.
- ☼ If growing from seed, the emerging seedlings may need more protection from passing people/animals than those sown in the garden. Perhaps start the seeds off in pots to plant out once sturdy.
- ☼ Why not share plants with your neighbours, doing a bit of 'mix & match'? Buy a bag of bulbs or seeds together and split them.
- ☼ Don't overplant—plants, including bulbs, are likely to reproduce and spread (bring your surplus to Chorlton Plant Swap!).
- ☼ Shrubs are likely to grow too large for a tree pit

Care & maintenance Feed the soil to keep plants healthy. Weed as needed. Top up with compost as needed. You probably won't need slug or snail control; but who knows, this is Manchester after all.

Health & Safety Although it may look nice, help to contain compost and provide some protection to the plants, any edging (whether a little fence, stones, bricks or tiles) is considered by the Council to be a potential trip hazard and therefore not recommended.

*Verbena
bonariensis
is a helpful
self-seeder*

Some Pitfalls

Tree pits that experience a lot of passing traffic from pedestrians will be at risk of trampling. Dogs and cats may have ideas other than flowers in mind as they pass... Whilst most passers-by will admire and enjoy a planted tree pit, others may be less public-spirited and help themselves to your blooms; so not to plant at too much expense.

Close to a busy street with narrow pavement? Cars may drive over or even park on the tree pits. Do steer clear of growing edibles due to cars' emissions (and other emissions previously mentioned). Salt spray in winter may unfortunately also be damaging to plants.



Don't forget the tree!

The pit's original inhabitant—the tree— needs nurturing too. It will need to be well watered when it is first becoming established. Don't plant too much permanent ground cover, such as spreading ivy, as the tree may then be competing for nutrients from the soil and for water.

All mature trees are pruned as needed by Manchester Council. For any maintenance issues or queries, contact them online or by phone.

Tree Envy?

Feeling inspired but there's no tree outside your house? You could approach a friendly neighbour who might like you to tend their tree pit.

Manchester residents who would like to be considered for a tree outside their house may express their interest to the Council. The Council prioritises areas where there are fewer trees. It may be possible to apply for funding through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. Contact your local councillor to find out more.



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Manchester City of Trees is a project working to plant more trees and nurture neglected woodland in the area. Volunteer with them or join events. More info at www.cityoftrees.org.uk



Manchester
City of Trees

Gardening links

- 🌱 BBC Gardening—www.bbc.co.uk/gardening. Use the *Plantfinder* facility to find out about specific plants.
- 🌱 Garden Organic—www.gardenorganic.org.uk
- 🌱 Royal Horticultural Society—www.rhs.org.uk
- 🌱 Type 'tree pit flowers' into a search engine's to see inspiring images

How Gorgeous is yours...?

Want to share your tree pit planting efforts? Please send us a photo to upload on the Chorlton Plant Swap website. Email Danielle at chorltonplantswap@googlemail.com. It will help inspire others!

Produced by **Chorlton Plant Swap**. It's what it says on the tin: an opportunity for people to swap plants and seeds in and around Chorlton. Do join in online or come to live swap events. www.facebook.com/groups/Chorltonplantswap

Compiled by Danielle Lowy for Chorlton Plant Swap with thanks for their input to Kevin Wigley from Red Rose Forest and to Liz Cole for horticultural know-how.