

Plug Planting Quick Guide

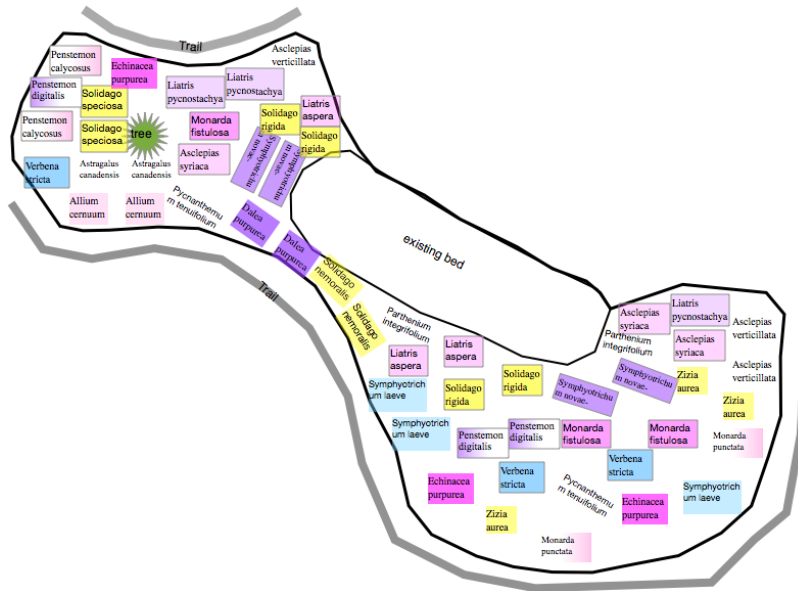
1. Scout the site out ahead of time and dig some practice holes to assess what tools and how much time you may need for the planting. If the ground has a lot of rocks, you may need additional soil to fill the voids left by the rocks you remove.



2. Depending on how much staff or volunteer time you have for the actual planting, you may need to pre-dig holes, or have the site partner assist with this, that way volunteers can just install the plants without requiring the time to dig.



- Determine what plants should go where ahead of time by creating a design plan. Tall plants should go in the back if it's a one-sided display, or in the middle if it will be viewed from multiple angles. Keep plants in clusters of the same species.



- When possible, lay out your plants ahead of time so volunteers don't have to guess where the plants go. If plants are not individually potted and it's hot, you may not want to put the bare soil plugs out and have them dry in the sun before they get planted.



5. If you have a lot of plants to install, auguring the holes ahead of time can help speed things up. This also may be necessary if the ground is hard and trowels do not work well for digging the holes.



6. Give a verbal description to all persons helping with the planting on what the purpose of the area is and how to properly install a plant. Then give a visual tutorial describing what you're doing and why for each step of the planting process. If people understand how important proper planting is and how to do it, they are more likely to care that they do a good job.



7. You can use your trowel to estimate how deep your hole needs to be by comparing it to the plug depth. It won't need to be quite as deep since you'll be breaking up the roots.



8. Plants may be pot-bound. Tickle those roots! Don't be afraid to damage the roots, the plant will recover, but the roots must be loosened for healthy establishment. You can cut them with your trowel, a knife, or rip them with your hands.



9. Make sure that the plant is level with the surrounding ground. It should **not** be depressed or sitting above the soil. Plants installed improperly likely will not survive. Apply a bit of pressure and fill in soil as needed to ensure good root-soil contact.



YES!



NO!



10. Don't be afraid to help someone understand the importance of properly installing the plant in the ground if you notice them doing it wrong. You will probably have to re-plant some of them as you walk around. It can be helpful to find someone who really cares and is doing a good job and ask them to help you find the poorly planted plugs and properly get them in the ground.



11. Come up with a plan of attack. I generally recommend planting from the center to the edge. This results in less plants being damaged by people stepping, kneeling, or sitting on them when installing surrounding plugs.

12. If applying mulch, 2-4 inches deep is recommended. Remind people to watch their feet, because it is easy to trample plants when mulching. Mulching is laborious work, so you will likely need to monitor and request people put more mulch in spots that are patchy. Divide and conquer! Have some people load wheel barrels, others dump the mulch, and a third group spread it out. Giving out tasks keeps from having a lot of people trying to figure out what to do with little getting accomplished.



13. If contractors are hired to apply the mulch, stress how deep it should be or else you might get a dusting, which is not adequate. Same with watering, stress that it must be a good soak.



14. Give it a good soak! Those plants just went through a lot of stress and need a good watering to help them recover and establish well! This should be followed by weekly watering for 4-6 weeks post-planting. More or less water may be needed in times of drought or lots of rainfall. Monitor plants for the first month or so and if they look wilted, they need more water!



Take lots of pictures! Shots to have in mind:

- Before, during, and after planting - great for your records, reports, and promotional materials. When possible, go back and take photos from the same angle throughout establishment.



- Group shot:



- Important project partners:



- Signage:



- Families and community organizations:



- People having fun!

