24-Plant Under-Tree Bloom Sheet

Safely plant and mulch around mature trees without damaging surface roots.

Create a beautiful dry-shade garden that protects your tree's structural anchors. Use these root-friendly planting techniques to help both your perennials and mature trees thrive.



Key Dimensions

4-inch pots
To fit in natural root pockets

3 inches
Air gap needed at bark flare

2-3 inches
Maximum mulch depth over soil

Out to drip line
Mulch boundary for shallow feeder roots

Min. 5 inches
Width for viable root gaps

Min. 1 foot
Distance from trunk for planting

Scilla Beats Leaf-Out

Plant early-spring bulbs like scilla; they complete their life cycle before the thick summer canopy plunges your garden into deep shade.

6-Step Pocket-Planting Sequence

1. **Probe for natural gaps** Push a hori-hori knife gently into the dirt to check pocket depth without slicing vital networks.
2. **Prep the soil** Scratch compost into the top inch to give new shade plants a slight advantage.
3. **Tease the root balls** Massage the bottom firmly with your thumbs to loosen the tangled base.
4. **Tuck and settle** Squeeze the loosened starter plants into the prepared gaps between thick woody roots.
5. **Water the pockets** Place a wand nozzle right at the base and soak until water pools slightly.
6. **Ensure deep saturation** Let the moisture soak in completely, then repeat once more for establishment.

Select Your Organic Mulch

Find your row: **Your terrain type**

Your terrain type	Your pick	Why
Sloped beds	Shredded cedar	Excellent airflow; lasts 12-18 months
Flat terrain	Pine bark nuggets	Very good airflow; lasts 24 months
Woodland edges	Composted leaves	Moderate airflow; lasts 6-8 months
Near any tree	Avoid dyed chips	Poor airflow; mats into waterproof barrier

Bloom Sheet: Featured Plants

- [ ] Early-spring sunlight: Scilla
- [ ] Early-spring sunlight: Daffodils
- [ ] Summer foliage: Native ferns
- [ ] Summer foliage: Variegated hostas
- [ ] Acidic pine soil: Rhododendrons
- [ ] Acidic pine soil: Hellebores
- [ ] Fruit tree borders: Bleeding hearts
- [ ] Modern contrast: Ornamental grasses

Pre-Planting Site Checks

- ○ Clear soil and debris away from the trunk base to create buffer.
- ○ Examine lower bark and visible roots for soft spots or mower wounds.
- ○ Verify no major woody roots cross through the center of your pockets.
- ○ Check soil moisture twice a week during the vulnerable first year.

Garden Notes & Bloom Tracker

Enjoy your thriving shade garden, and remember to refresh that cedar mulch every spring!