Purify, Beautify, and Cool Your Street with a Neighborhood Tree-Planting Project

While Denver is known for its beautiful tree-lined streets, tree-filled parks, and shaded yards; there are still many parts of Denver that could use more trees or shade. Whether it’s an area of recent new construction, a block whose trees were damaged by a recent storm, or a business or large building owner who never planted any trees; all are ripe for a tree planting project. This outline provides a step by step guide to conducting a neighborhood tree planting project with tips and success stories to help you launch your project successfully. These are in a general order but you might need to follow them in a different order depending on your project.

1. Identify the Project and Location for planting a group of trees.
   a. Tour your neighborhood, preferably with friends or neighbors and look for areas that could benefit from a few more trees
   b. Targets are usually pretty obvious: big gaps in the tree canopy, lengths of a particular block devoid of trees in the parkway, large parking areas or empty lots with no shaded spots, and new developments that did not retain the previous trees
   c. Prioritize your list of locations by the potential benefits to your whole neighborhood so you can present it to more people or a larger audience
2. Organize Your Team
   a. Find like-minded tree fans at your local neighborhood association; online through NextDoor, Facebook, or other neighborhood apps; or at a local coffee shop, nursery, or beer garden
   b. Host a meeting to discuss your list, local concerns and ideas, get contact information, find other neighbors, and organize a walking tour
   c. Determine what your group is interested in and identify some potential projects both from your list and from other’s ideas
   d. Conduct a walking tour to verify potential projects and make sure everyone understands the locations

3. Identify resources to help you and your team get educated and trained
   a. Denver Digs Trees – consider volunteering at an event to learn how to plant trees, what trees work best in Denver, and what programs may be available to help you with your project
   b. Denver Tree Resources for Property Owners (Urban Forester) from the Parks and Recreation Dept
      i. Denver Approved Street Tree List
   c. 75 Best Trees for Colorado Yards
   d. Five “Go-To” Trees Perfect for Colorado Gardens

4. Involve a local business or businesses
   a. Can provide a place for you to meet (benefits the business as well)
   b. Can provide refreshments for your event(s)
   c. May be a source of funding especially if you volunteer to help them plant some trees around their building or in open space nearby to improve their block
   d. Independent coffee shops or businesses whose owner lives in the neighborhood are especially good targets for partners
5. Tree planting
   a. The planting sites need to be surveyed ahead of time (call 811)
   b. A permit is required to plant a tree in the right-of-way (parkway)
   c. Follow the Park People Guide to Planting Trees
   d. Utility considerations

6. Plan your planting day event
   a. Arrange for a truck or trailer (or have trees delivered)
   b. Garden Tools at least a shovel, rake and box cutter (to trim off burlap root ball) required. If it has been particularly dry, our Denver soil is easier to dig when it has been wet down for several days in advance
   c. Water Source to immediately water the tree and settle the soil after planting
   d. Provide refreshments or plan an after-party following the event

7. Maintenance and Care
   a. Trees need adequate water for their first 3 years (2 years is not enough)
   b. 5 gallons of water per week (10 gallons per week when temp is 95+)
   c. Yard irrigation systems are not adequate to ensure deep waterings
   d. More care tips from the Park People

   Success Tips
   • During or after planting of each tree, have the person who is going to take care of the tree give it a name. This makes the tree special and unique to that person (and the crew who planted it). Believe it or not, this really helps in the ongoing care and in making sure the regular watering happens. People would rather, “Go give Lucy (actual tree name) a drink of water.” than just “Water my tree.”
   • Organize future events to check back in on the trees you planted. It helps to record them on a map with the date planted and stop by in early spring to see how the leaves are budding, on a hot summer day to see how the tree is doing in heat, and around Halloween to make sure there is enough mulch around the tree to keep the roots warm in winter. These events are also a good way to catch up with your original neighborhood crew and recruit new members.