



When planting a new tree it is important to consider a suitable planting site and to make sure the tree can be maintained throughout its life. The tree will grow and be part of the site for decades to come. At a well chosen site the tree will thrive, benefiting the ecosystem, wider environment and providing amenity to the site. An inappropriate planting site, however, may result in high maintenance costs, new risks and hazards, or a conflict of interest which may lead to the tree being removed. Below are a few of the considerations when choosing a planting site, but there may be other concerns specific to your site.

Built environment: A tree needs space to grow and develop, both above and below ground. The majority of the twelve species available through Trees for Sacred Spaces are small or medium sized trees, with the exception of the lime, tulip and yew trees. Please see the species guide for approximate height and spread. Consider the proximity of the planting site to buildings, power lines, paths, archaeology, and pipes. If planted too close to these the tree may require regular maintenance, such as pruning to prevent branches damaging structures.

Other trees and wildlife: Trees will grow to adapt to their environment. Other trees can block light and nutrients, suppressing the growth of the new tree or causing it to lean at an angle to find more light, which can reduce its stability and bring it in conflict with buildings.

Equally, you should also consider what impact the new tree will have on the environment. Once established it may be detrimental to other trees or wildlife. For example the tree may prevent light reaching lichen on existing trees, buildings or gravestones.

Environment: A tree's growth is dependent on a wide range of environmental factors. As well as access to light, the ground conditions are also important. Most notable is that in the first years trees will require regular watering but the six Trees for Sacred Spaces species do not tolerate waterlogged sites and a well-drained site is needed.

Permission: In churchyards or on church land you must contact your relevant diocese officer before planting (see contact details below) but other sites may also have particular requirements. For example the site may be within a Conservation Area which may restrict new plantings. If the site or the trees are managed by someone else, such as the Local Authority, you must make sure they are aware of the planting and happy for it to go ahead.

Uses of the site and risks: The site may have many uses that you will need to take into account. For example a path or bench will guide people towards particular areas of a site so you should consider how your tree will impact this – will it block a sightline, shade a sunny area or create a new hazard?

There may also be risks to the tree. If the tree is planted in an area accessible to the public it could be vandalised, or killed during mowing or strimming. You can help to protect the tree by installing the tree guard, included with your tree, and staking the tree – but these will need to be removed in later years.

Maintaining your tree: A sensible planting site will significantly reduce the amount of maintenance the tree will need over its lifetime, but you will need to continue to inspect the tree throughout its life and undertake work when required.

New trees require regular watering in spring and summer, early or late in the day. You can delegate these tasks to another responsible person – why not ask them to adopt the tree and care for it.

Permission and contact details

Before planting you must receive permission to do so from the person or organisation responsible for managing the site and trees. If planting on church land you must contact your relevant diocese office.

If the site or the trees are managed by the Local Authority, contact your council or see the London Tree Officers Association website:

www.ltoa.org.uk/contacts/borough-contacts

Links & further reading

[ChurchCare: Works to trees](#)

[Trees for Cities: How to assess the suitability of a site](#)

[Trees and Design Action Group: Guides](#)

[Trees Are Good: Guides on planting, risk management, and maintenance](#)

[Urban Tree Foundation: Planting](#)

[Forest Research: Urban Trees](#)

[British Lichen Society: Churchyards](#)