

# Adopt-A-Spot Beautification Program

## Tip Sheet

**Thank you!** The City of Columbia truly appreciates your participation in the Adopt-A-Spot Beautification Program. This is a unique program that allows citizens like yourself an opportunity for hands-on involvement to improve the looks of your community. From time to time, we will hold events and activities to say thanks. We hope you can attend when those events are held. Thanks for volunteering!

**Program Expectations:** As was outlined in the Council Agreement signed when you began in the Adopt-A-Spot program, the City of Columbia expects that you will:

- Keep your bed weed-free
- Make sure your bed is planted with the species and number of plants appropriate to your bed
- Water your bed as needed

For beds that are not maintained to these expectations, we may ask you to give the bed additional attention, or to allow the Office of Volunteer Services to find a different adopter to care for the bed.

**Safety:** Keeping our volunteers safe is a top priority for the City of Columbia. Volunteer Programs will provide, upon your request, safety vests for you and members of your group. Please put them to use! If you are working at an Adopt-A-Spot along a busy street, be aware of passing vehicles and be careful especially when working at the perimeter of the bed. We have bright orange "Volunteers at Work" signs available if you would like to use them.

**Evaluation:** The City of Columbia tries to evaluate all of the Adopt-A-Spots quarterly. The evaluations are meant as a way to give our volunteers feedback on their spots, and help maintain quality in the program. The evaluations may be done by city Parks & Recreation or Volunteer Programs staff or by a volunteer group with an interest in landscaping or horticulture. We hope you will see the evaluations as a tool.

**Hydrant Locks & Quick Coupler Keys:** Volunteer Programs will provide some adopters a lock for the hydrant located in your Adopt-A-Spot to prevent improper use of water from the hydrant. Please use the lock to prevent passers-by from using water from the hydrants. Some beds have a quick coupler system that is flush to the ground. Each adopter will be given a key to access the water when your agreement begins. If the key is lost, the adopter must pay for a replacement key.

**Signs:** Your Adopt-A-Spot sign is the means for telling others in the community that you are making our city a more beautiful place. It is important to the City of Columbia that signs be in place to recognize your efforts. Should your sign be vandalized, stolen, run over, or needs to be replaced for another reason, please notify the Office of Volunteer Services and we will order a replacement sign.

**Weed Control:** All Adopters are encouraged to give weed control some thought. Do you have the time and energy to hand-weed your spot? If not, you might consider using a pre-emergent product such as Preen. You might also want to use a herbicide such as Roundup. As with any chemical, please take the time to read the label before use. Never use more herbicide than recommended, or damage to desirable plants may result. Follow the directions carefully.

**Mulch:** It is the responsibility of the adopter to provide mulch for your spot. The City Public Works Department provides free mulch on a regular basis that can be picked up at a mulch site. Through the Share the Light program, we will offer mulch from once each year at no cost to you. Adopters may receive mulch one time during a 12 month period. The mulch will be delivered to your bed and it is the responsibility of the adopter to spread the mulch. You must let us know if you care to receive the mulch so we can schedule delivery. Mulch will be available while we have funds to purchase it.

**New & Replacement Plants:** The City of Columbia normally purchases or shares the cost of plants when the Adopt-A-Spots are established. Replacement plants or plants added to the bed are the responsibility of the adopter.

**Equipment:** The City of Columbia has two wheelbarrows and several hand tools that may be used by volunteers in their Adopt-A-Spots. We have some at City Hall and can also borrow more from Parks & Recreation. Please contact Volunteer Programs at least one day in advance of when you need to use these items.

**Tax Reminder:** As you are volunteering for the City of Columbia and your efforts are for the public good, any expenses you incur while maintaining your Adopt-A-Spot may be deductible as a charitable expense. We can assist you with documentation if needed.

**Need Help?** If you ever have questions or need advice, please contact Volunteer Programs at 874-7499 or [volunteer@como.gov](mailto:volunteer@como.gov). If needed, we can get you in contact with the city horticulturalist, forester, or arborist.