

# How to Adopt & Maintain an Island

## Elements of a successful island planting:

- Only commit to what you can maintain. Neighbors who adopt an island are responsible not only for the planting and design of an island re-do, but for the maintenance, including weeding & watering.
- Site plants appropriately for their needs. Put shade-lovers in shade, sun-lovers in sun. Simple but effective tactic.
- Choose plants and trees that have a history of success in our region, and won't need too much coddling to thrive. Native plant resources are listed on the attached form, along with an explanation of why they make great specimens.
- Remember when choosing plants that islands and medians are harsh environments for plants; they are usually very dry with limited access to water, get trampled by trucks, and can suffer from salted roads in the winter.
- Include plants for all seasons, from spring bulbs to evergreens for winter. This takes some skill, and may warrant some expert input.
- The islands were an important part of the original plan for Roland Park. They serve to calm traffic, and without them many intersections would be large expanses of concrete, especially where more than 2 streets meet. To keep these intersections safe, drivers need to see across an island to oncoming traffic. Make sure plants and shrubs max out their height at about 3 feet.
- Find neighbors who will help from the planning stage on. It's a big job, you'll want some help, and folks will be more dedicated if they have some say in how the final product looks. If you need help starting the process, just ask RP beautification!

## The step-by-step process

- 1. Recruitment:** Get friendly neighbors involved, via flyers, email, or a sign posted on the island. Notify RP Beautification about your plans, so that we can contribute.
- 2. Assessment:** Spend some time really looking at the island you'd like to adopt. Note what's already there; trees, shrubs, perennials, grass, weeds. What do you like? What do you want to continue to care for? Is a tree or shrub healthy? Are the perennials thriving? If something's already doing well in the harsh island environment, you may want to

consider keeping it. Remember, you'll be taking responsibility for keeping the island looking good, and keeping established plants alive is easier than establishing new ones.

- 3. Design:** Using the criteria above, figure out what you want where, and how much it will cost. Remember the hard-working native plants! Roland Park Beautification is a great resource for design help and feedback.
- 4. Schedule planting & purchase plants:** Schedule a workday (Saturdays are good, since you can use Sunday as a rain date). If the island you've chosen has been neglected a long time, or is just a patch of grass, you'll need to prepare the site before planting. Kill grass & weeds with a few layers of wet newspaper & lay several inches of good compost over top a week before planting. Contact RP Beautification to coordinate purchasing plants at wholesale prices.
- 5. Do it!** Don't forget to take before & after pictures! Be sure you've got a volunteer supplying coffee, water & snacks.
- 6. Enjoy!** We know we will!
- 7. Maintain:** Once you've rehabilitated your island, Roads and Maintenance will no longer mow it (of course!), and they haven't the capacity to maintain newly planted garden islands. So the job is all yours and your neighbors'. Plantings will require regular watering for the first year to get established. Recently disturbed ground also needs lots of weeding, so be prepared to bend down & get your hands dirty for a while every month of the growing season. If you can no longer maintain your island or move away, please inform RP Beautification so that we can recruit a new neighbor to care for the island. If no one steps up, Roads & Maintenance will take over the job again.