What are the advantages of planting plugs?

Planting plugs is the method of choice for many planting designers and public gardens for many reasons.
- Reduced plastic waste: many plants share a single tray
- Reduced fossil fuels and labor for shipping: many plants fit in a small space
- Strong root systems: small soil volume and vertical design of each plug promotes healthy rooting, with lots of roots supporting a relatively small mass of top growth. This allows plants to establish and thrive more quickly after planting.
- Value: relatively low cost per plant. We have a saying when using plugs... "Buy the plant, not the pot!"

Did Olbrich Gardens grow these plants?

Not even one! Our greenhouse space is always packed to capacity with plants on their way to the outdoor gardens or conservatory. We sourced plant material from a variety of our favorite growers to stock the unique mixes for each tray. Upon arrival, we unpacked all the single variety trays and re-packed them into the curated mixed trays. You may notice slight variability in the size of plugs in your plug tray since each growers’ trays are slightly different. Our suppliers include trusted growers that specialize in plugs like Bluebird Nursery, North Creek Nurseries, and Stonehouse Nursery.

When should I plant my plugs?

Ideally, plant your plugs within a week of pickup, making sure to keep them in a protected spot and well-watered prior to planting. Planting can be delayed by a few extra days if unseasonable weather is in the forecast such as frost or especially warm and sunny days.

What happens if there are substitutions to the plants selections advertised in the tray descriptions?

Mother Nature can be unpredictable and it’s not uncommon that there are changes to plant availability that arise during winter and early spring. But gardeners are flexible and substitutions can contribute to some fun new plant combinations! We put a lot of effort into brainstorming many potential plant varieties for each custom mix, and will adjust the species and ratios of plants in each tray should the need arise. We still guarantee a long season of interest, with dynamic textures and seasonal blooms, even if substitutions become necessary.

How will I recognize the plants in my tray?

In each 32-plug tray, expect to find 6 to 7 different plant varieties, with 4-6 individual plants of each variety. Each variety will be individually labeled within the tray. All plants have been selected to work well with a spacing of about 12-18” between them in the garden.

Is caring for plugs after planting different than plants purchased in individual pots?

It’s not much different. Due to the small volume of potting soil around the plug, they might dry out more quickly than you’re used to. Deep watering every 2-3 days for the first few weeks is a good recommendation but monitor soil moisture levels frequently by sticking a finger in the soil to a depth of 1”. If rabbits or deer frequent your yard, consider caging your plants or protecting them with a scent-based repellent. Phlox, Echinacea, and Asters can be especially attractive to deer and rabbits.

Additional questions? Mike Gibson, Olbrich’s Program Specialist – mgibson2@cityofmadison.com