

Tips on How to Run a Plant Swap/Giveaway

GreenGrace, Grace Episcopal Church

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Many folks have plants to give away each year, or have too many to plant extra in plant packs – whether the plants are edibles or ornamentals. It's fun and easy to run an exchange, or an exchange/giveaway combined. We have found a few rules to be helpful.

1. Make sure invasive plants are NOT allowed. These are foreign, exotic plants which will consume a landscape and which, when people have them, they almost immediately have way too many. These are plants like English ivy, Japanese honeysuckle, vinca and eponymous vine, monkey grass. Or, God forbid, privet.. We like to make it a 'native plant giveaway', but will also accept reasonable quantities of old- fashioned passalong or heirloom plants like iris, daffodils, African violets, peonies, roses. We also take all trees and shrubs native to North America.
2. Make sure the plants are labeled, especially woody ornamentals like trees and shrubs which may still be dormant. Common or heirloom names are fine, but if possible encourage people to also look up the latin name.
 - a. You can label plants with masking tape loops, twine and paper, and anything durable enough to last through the swap. We recommend popsicle sticks, written with graphite (pencil), which lasts far longer than any other ink/marker.
 - b. We check them as they come in, and always have a bag of popsicle sticks ready.
 - c. Note: decrepit mini-blinds also make good, long lasting plant labels if you cut them up.
3. Set up your times and have someone there—someone who knows plants if at all possible — to help supervise the exchange.
4. Depending on how many plants and people are there, you may just want to give them away to whomever shows up. At other times we have done “bring one, take three” or whatever it looks like the plants will support.

5. If there's a nearby neighborhood association, be sure to put the word out to them. People hate to throw away plants, and the more at your swap the better the choice.
6. Leftovers. We sometimes take a few home ourselves, but usually we leave them out for a few days and then have to dumpster them. It can be hard, but you have to be sane. Sometimes people will want the container, but not the plant.
7. You could easily do one each spring and fall, combined with a produce giveaway. Just use whatever email, bulletins, and social media available and hope for the best.

Good luck! -- Lisa Lemza & Kristina Shaneyfelt, Grace Episcopal Church.