

TIPS for hosting a Show Me Help Me tour

Thank you for volunteering your yard for our tour. Our tours have been educational (and fun!) for both the host and the attendees. There are no rules for hosting a tour, but here are some tips to consider.

Scheduling: There really is no “best” time to schedule your tour. On any given day, people will be out of town on vacation, and weather is always an unknown for outdoor programs. Just pick a time that works best for you.

Description: We announce the tour in our newsletter, and it’s important to provide a very brief description of the type of yard you have and the kinds of things that will be of interest to guests. For example, you might indicate whether it’s an urban, suburban, or rural area, an established landscape or only a few years old, mainly woodland, grassland, etc. These are only examples; each landscape has different features that might interest people. Just give some idea of what might be of interest in your landscape. Two or three sentences will do; more if you’d like.

RSVPs: You can choose whether or not you would like people to RSVP in advance of the tour. If you choose to request RSVPs, your address will not be published in the HGCNY newsletter, just your contact information (your email address and/or phone number). If you prefer not to have people RSVP, we’ll put your address and directions to your house in the newsletter.

Advantages of requesting RSVPs: You know how many people to plan for. If bad weather or an emergency arises, you can notify people of the change. You can choose to restrict the number of people you would like to have, which may be important if your yard is small.

Disadvantage of requesting RSVPs: You have to provide the directions to the people who have RSVP’d.

Directions: Whether you request RSVPs and are providing directions to each attendee, or whether you provide directions for the newsletter and/or the website, please take time to write clear and complete directions. Not everyone has a GPS, and they don't always show the best routes anyway. You know the best route, and people appreciate clear directions.

Refreshments: Some hosts provide refreshments; some hosts don’t. It’s entirely up to you. Whatever choice you make, though, it’s nice to provide water, especially on hot days.

Other amenities: Sometimes one or two attendees need a place to sit and rest for a while, so arranging to have a couple of chairs available is helpful.

Cautions: Think about any cautions you want to notify people about (e.g. unfriendly dogs) or places you prefer people avoid (e.g. stepping on the planting beds). If possible, remove tripping hazards.

The tour itself: Our tours are fun, but they also have a purpose: to help everyone—host and guests alike—learn how to create living landscapes.

Before the tour, think about how your yard is fulfilling our Wild Ones mission of using native plants, natural landscapes, and earth-friendly gardening practices to promote biodiversity in your yard and beyond.

You aren’t expected to give a lecture, but you might find it useful to take this opportunity to think about a couple of the following questions ahead of time.

For example, how has your landscape changed over the years? What things have succeeded; what things haven't? What would you like your landscape to be like in five years? What have been the biggest challenges, and how have you solved them? And what have been your expected or unexpected joys as your yard becomes more alive?

People will likely ask you the names of some of your plants. This is a good opportunity to review the names of your plants; knowing the scientific name is especially useful both for guests and for yourself.

And don't miss this golden opportunity to take advantage of our collective wisdom – the “Help Me” part of our tour. Think about any landscaping dilemmas you’d like to ask the guests about. We don’t guarantee solutions, but we always come up with some ideas!

Thank you again for sharing your yard!