

## Promote Gratitude with a Neighborhood Thankful Tree

A Neighborhood Thankful Tree offers the gift of thanksgiving to those who live around you. It is a visual way for your neighbors and family to practice gratitude. People write down items they are thankful for and add them to the tree as leaves.

Hundreds of studies about gratitude have documented its physical, emotional, social, and mental benefits. A Thankful Tree is a living, fabricated, or abstract tree that is set apart to encourage the practice of thanksgiving.

When the undertaking is finished,

- There will be a visual, tangible representation of the blessings that abound in your neighborhood
- Neighbors, friends, and family will reap the benefits of the practice of gratitude
- The need for connection and community will be strengthened



### Establish a Neighborhood Thankful Tree

Whether it is for a week or a month, put up a gratitude tree in your yard or outside your apartment door and invite others to stop and practice thanksgiving.

#### Step 1: Choose a "Tree"

You may have a tree in your yard that will work, or you may have to get creative.

- Choose a tree with low branches that can be easily reached
- Create a "tree" by using
  - A sturdy 5-gallon bucket or another suitable container
  - Sand or rocks for weight
  - A large branch or branches
  - Burlap or material to wrap the bucket
- Purchase a tree in a container that can be planted after thanksgiving
- Use an artificial tree or metal art.



#### Step 2: Gather the "leaves"

"Leaves" are simply tags or paper strips large enough to write notes of thanksgiving, which can be attached to your tree. They can be purchased or made.

- Merchandise tags or shipping tags hold up pretty well out in the weather and can be bought at an office supply store.
- Make your own tags, punch holes in them and attach string or twine

If you choose to be creative

- Use scrapbook or construction paper, cut squares (laminated if you choose), then die-cut, or scissor cut into the shapes of leaves. Punch a hole and attach a string or twine so they can be tied to the tree.
- Purchase pre-cut leaves at a craft store and laminate.

### **Step 3: Prepare signage with instructions and provide writing materials**

Provide the items necessary for people to get involved.

- Make your own or order a sign from a sign shop with a simple explanation of what your Thankful Tree is all about and how to share “leaves” of gratitude.
- Select a container for the items needed for people to write and add “leaves” of thanksgiving. (Pay careful consideration to your location and weather.)
- Include multiple permanent markers (some will “walk-off” and others will dry out)
- Provide a large supply of tags or “leaves.”



### **Step 4: Set the tree up in your yard or outside your apartment door**

Make your Thankful Tree accessible.

- Set up your tree early enough for maximum participation.
- Choose a location that is accessible so neighbors can come and easily attach tags or “leaves” of thanksgiving.
- If your tree is not natural, secure it so it will not easily fall or be blown over.
- If you desire, wrap, and decorate your container or the base of the tree.
- Write down what you are thankful for on a few tags or “leaves” to demonstrate the process and attach them to the tree.
- Place the container with the permanent markers and additional blank tags or “leaves” near your tree.

### **Step 5: Invite your neighbors**

Get your neighborhood involved in thanksgiving and let them know how to participate.

- Display the signage to encourage those passing by to stop and participate.
- Send an invitation via your local neighborhood site such as Next Door.
- Go door to door. Print and use invitation flyer on the following page and give them a tag or “leaf” to fill out and bring by later and add to the tree. Encourage their using a permanent marker or pen. Note that more tags or “leaves” will be available at the tree.

### **Step 6: Celebrate Thanksgiving**

Thanksgiving is a communal holiday. Choose a time that might best fit your neighborhood and invite your neighbors to gather for a time of thanksgiving.

- When gathered, pause in a moment of silence and introspection to be thankful.
- Allow participants to verbally share things for which they are thankful.
- Lead-out and say a prayer of thanksgiving.
- Provide refreshments and enjoy the fellowship of neighbors.
- Reap the benefits of gratitude.
- For 2020, remember to practice social distancing and safety guidelines.



**Will you be a catalyst in bringing your neighborhood together to give thanks?**

## Promoting Gratitude with a Thankful Tree

Fill in the information necessary and deliver along with a tag to neighbors. If you choose to not have a gathering cut the card between #s 4 and 5

### You are invited to participate in a Neighborhood Thankful Tree

The tree is located at

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Sponsored by

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For the remainder of the month of November you may

1. Write what you are thankful for on the tags provided
2. Additional tags for more notes are located at the tree  
(Complete the thoughts "I am thankful for.." or "I am graceful for..")
3. Hang the tags anywhere on the tree
4. Return as many times as you wish
5. Gather outside with you neighbors for a brief time of thanksgiving

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

*Social Distancing and safety protocols will be observed*

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