

*Robyn Ashley Weddings*

NYC WEDDING OFFICIANT

THE OFFICIANT'S CUT

# The Tree Planting Ceremony.

*The full ritual to read at the altar: the words for each scoop of soil, the soil station that keeps it clean, the delivery cues, and the pot version for couples who rent.*

AS SEEN IN

*Tamron Hall · Brides · The Knot*

FROM ROBYN'S DESK

## The ritual that *keeps growing.*

The first tree planting I officiated almost turned into a mess. The soil was dry and packed, the trowel was caked from someone's garden, and the bride was in white silk reaching elbow-deep into a bag.

Everything that went wrong that day was a setup problem, and setup is the easy part to fix. Loosen the soil ahead of time. Bring clean tools. Build a low station so nobody has to crouch over a bag of dirt in their wedding clothes.

So this is the tree planting ceremony with the setup on the same page as the script, the way I run it now. The words for each step are set in large type, so whoever is reading can do it at arm's length. In the margins are the cues I have learned over 300+ ceremonies.

Read it once out loud in your own voice. Cut anything that does not sound like you. The ritual is yours.

*Robyn*

ROBYN ASHLEY WEDDINGS · BROOKLYN ·  
NYC



# What you'll *actually need.*

*A tree or plant matched to where it will live.* A sapling suited to your climate for a yard, or a dwarf fruit tree, a bonsai, or a sturdy houseplant if it will live in a pot. Pick something hardy that can survive transport and a busy wedding day.

*Loosened soil, a clean trowel, and a small watering vessel.* Loosen the soil ahead of time so it pours easily, and bring a trowel that is not caked in last season's dirt. A small pitcher or watering can for the finish.

*A low station with a cloth or tray underneath.* The pot or planting hole, the soil within easy reach, set on a cloth so nobody is crouching over a bag and nothing stains the floor or the dress.

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## ROBYN'S NOTE

The photos here are close-ups of your hands in the soil. Clean tools and pre-loosened soil are the whole difference between *elegant and messy*, and almost nobody preps for it.

# One bag, or *your whole history.*

## DO THIS PART EARLY

*Gather and label the jars a week ahead, never the morning of. A scoop from each childhood home, from where you met, from a city you lived in together. Tighten the lids and keep them dry until the ceremony.*

Standard potting soil is fine, and it will look the same in a photo. The version that makes people cry uses soil from places that matter, each in its own labeled jar, poured into the same pot.

Have each partner, and any family you include, pour their jar in turn so the room sees the histories mixing. The tree then grows out of all of it at once.

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## ROBYN'S NOTE

Couples who have moved around love this one. Label the lids with masking tape and a marker so the reader can name each place out loud as it goes in. That naming is what catches the room.

# Hand the words *to a reader.*

***Where it goes.*** The planting lives after the vows and ring exchange, where the emotional arc is already climbing. It runs about four to six minutes since there is soil and water to handle, so keep the steps simple and the station close.

***Who delivers it.*** The officiant, a parent, or a close friend reads the words. The two of you should have your hands in the soil and your eyes on each other, not down at a page.

— *[Reader, stand to the side of the station so guests can see both pairs of hands. Speak to the room, not down at the page.]*

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## ROBYN'S NOTE

The planting is the visible moment guests came for. Give them a clean sightline to the couple's hands, then step out of the frame. The hands in the soil are the picture.

# Putting down *roots*.

— *[Reader, address the guests. The couple steps to the station, hands free, the soil within reach.]*

**[PARTNER 1]** and **[PARTNER 2]** have chosen to plant a tree together to mark their marriage today.

A marriage, like a tree, does not arrive full-grown. It is planted, and then it is tended, through every season. What you nurture is what grows.

— *[Slow down here. Let the room look at the tree before anyone touches the soil.]*

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## ROBYN'S NOTE

Name what the tree is and where it will live. "A fig that will sit on their fire escape in Brooklyn" makes a houseplant feel like a landmark, and the room leans in.

# Add your *soil*.

[PARTNER 1] and [PARTNER 2], add your soil now.

— *[The couple adds soil around the roots, together or in turn. Reader, wait for their hands to settle before the next line.]*

This soil comes from where you have been. The roots will grow into the life you are building now, drawing on everything that came before.

— *[Optional: family or children add their soil here. Name each person as they step in.]*

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## ROBYN'S NOTE

This is a great moment to bring kids in. A child adding a scoop of soil gives them a real job in the ceremony, and it is the shot the family photographer waits all day for.

# Give it *water*.

Now, give it water.

— *[The couple waters the tree lightly. A splash, not a flood. You are finishing the planting, not drowning it.]*

May you tend this marriage the way you will tend this tree: with patience, with attention, and with the faith that what you nurture will grow.

— *[Let the watering finish before you move anyone on. The room wants to see the last pour settle.]*

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## ROBYN'S NOTE

Hand the couple a small pre-filled pitcher rather than a heavy can. Light is easier to control, the pour looks graceful, and you avoid a flood at the altar.

# If you don't *have a yard.*

*If you rent.* Plant into a pot during the ceremony and transplant later if you move somewhere with ground. The ritual is identical, and the container just comes with you. Renters do this all the time.

*If you want the kids in it.* Give each child a small jar of soil to add after the couple. It gives them a real part in the day, and it reads beautifully in a blended family.

*If you want it to keep growing with you.* Choose a plant you can re-pot as it grows, and add a scoop of soil on each anniversary. The tree becomes a record of the years you can actually water.

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## ROBYN'S NOTE

Whatever the container, the read is the same: you put down roots and you tend what you planted. Pick the version that is genuinely yours and the room can tell.

## If it goes *sideways*.

*If the soil spills off the table.* Keep moving and say, "Roots find their way into everything, that is rather the point." Then have someone tidy it quietly after the ritual.

*If the trowel is missing or the soil is packed.* Plant with your hands and say, "We will do this the old way." Hands in the soil reads warmer than a tool anyway.

*If the reader loses the line.* Stop, find the place, and go on. The room reads a short pause as care, never as a stumble.

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### ROBYN'S NOTE

The difference between a first-timer and a pro is not that the pro never fumbles. It is that the pro has a warm line ready, says it, and keeps the ritual moving.

# Three things *before you plant for real.*

*This is one ritual, marked the way I would mark my own. Treat it as a working draft and it starts sounding like you.*

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*Pick the plant for where it will live, not just for the photo.*

A hardy sapling for a yard, a dwarf tree or sturdy houseplant for a pot. Avoid anything fragile that will not survive transport and a busy day, and confirm it fits your climate.

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*Prep the station and the soil the night before.*

Loosen the soil so it pours, clean the trowel, fill the watering vessel, and lay a cloth under the station. If you are using meaningful soil, label and tighten every jar a week out.

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*Read it aloud once, and fill every bracket a week out.*

Whoever is reading runs it start to finish in their own voice. Fill each [BRACKET] in advance, name the tree and where it will live, and print a clean copy on cardstock.

*"We were writing the ceremony ourselves and kept getting stuck on where the tree planting fit with everything else. The kit had the whole arc already. We dropped our words in and it sounded like us."*

DANA & MARCUS · MARRIED IN THE HUDSON VALLEY, 2025

IF THIS RITUAL IS DOING ITS JOB

## The whole ceremony, *not just one planting.*

The tree planting is one ritual. A ceremony is the architecture around it: the processional, the welcome, the vows, the unity moment, the pronouncement, all timed so the planting falls at the right beat instead of feeling bolted on. The Couple's Ceremony Kit is the full word-for-word framework I use, with scripts for tree planting and fifteen other unity rituals, written so you can drop your own words in.

# \$79

Open the Couple's Ceremony Kit →

ONE-TIME PAYMENT · LIFETIME ACCESS · 48-HOUR MONEY-BACK

# Where this *came from*.

## PULLED FROM

The tree plantings I have folded into NYC and Hudson Valley ceremonies, indoors and out, with the setup notes I now give every couple up front. The structure is field-tested over *more than 300 ceremonies*.

## WHAT IS IN THE KIT

The full word-for-word ceremony framework, with scripts for tree planting and every other unity ritual, written so you can drop your own words in. All of it in *the Couple's Ceremony Kit*.

## USE THIS FREELY

Print it, mark it up, hand a copy to whoever is reading at the altar, run it at the rehearsal.

## IF YOU DO ONE

Email me. I read every one.  
*hello@robynashleyweddings.com*.

*Marked from a working ritual, with the setup notes and cues I use at the front of the aisle.*

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*About this ritual, and where it has been planted.*