

The Orchard That Forgot Spring

120-minute plan | 4 players | No combat

Spring reaches every field except one orchard. Its caretaker blames a sleeping tree spirit; a dry channel suggests a more practical secret.

Content notice: Crop loss and scarce water; no starvation scenes.

What is really happening

Caretaker Anja diverted the orchard's water to a nursery during a frost. She meant to reopen it, but a root jammed the return sluice. The tree spirit is awake and conserving its flowers. Reopening the shared channel restores both crops; a temporary watering rota saves saplings but postpones blossom.

Prepare and play

Use your own rules or play without dice. State the goal, choose an approach, explain a reasonable cost and let the players decide. Plausible careful actions succeed; uncertain actions can succeed with delay, spent supplies or a favour owed. Evidence is always available through its described action. Each player creates an ordinary person with a useful skill, a reason to help, and an item. No character sheet, monster statistics or proprietary rulebook is needed.

Take 10 minutes to introduce characters, read the premise and discuss the content notice. Anyone may say "pause", pass on a description, or ask to move an uncomfortable moment offstage. Agree on no combat and on treating consequences as delay or repair, not permanent harm. Give one player the route map and another the time sheet.

Time plan

120-MINUTE PLAN

0-10: Opening agreement

10-20: Arrival

20-35: Records and tools

35-50: An independent trail

50-55: Break

55-75: The immediate problem

75-95: The final choice

95-110: Home and aftermath

110-120: Closing and epilogues

Follow both investigations; take the break before the immediate problem.

At 75 minutes, settle the immediate problem using a safe approach without another roll. At 95 minutes,

finish the final method and begin the return.

With 10 minutes left, first secure the immediate goal: Leave the root undisturbed and establish a well-to-nursery bucket chain. Mark the immediate goal safe only once the people or resource are secured. Then, if no final method was used: Offer a signed watering rota; ask for one symbolic blossom while the repair waits. Mark the fallback method and read the cost ending. Give each character an epilogue; do not bypass the safety step.

4 PLAYERS

Free the root while keeping the nursery channel supplied.

Two pairs take observation and action tasks. Resolve them in two short alternating turns.

Persuade the old tree that the orchard can spare water for flowers.

Work in two pairs, one following the method and the other preparing a fallback or record.

Arrival - 10 minutes

Place: Orchard gate

Read aloud

Bare branches frame a lane of yellow flowers. Moss has hung blank ribbons where the blossom wreaths should be.

Run this scene

Water was diverted during a real emergency. A rota offers a slower, nonmagical fallback. Begin with the concrete request in the premise. Ask each character why they care and give them one ordinary useful item. Read both public observations without requiring a roll. Explain that the marked routes are safe to investigate, and offer a choice of the records or the visible trail. Let the group appoint a map reader; do not use hidden travel rolls to block the first lead.

Choices

1. Visit Seed shed
2. Follow the trail to Nursery bank

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Root sluice. A missing method can be found again at Old pear tree; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Moss: Keep the spring fair from being cancelled Offers directions and ordinary transport for news of the outcome. Voice: Patient, concrete sentences; ask one practical question.

Timeline record: The frost dates match the first day of dry orchard soil. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Water was diverted during a real emergency.

Fallback instruction: Buckets from the public well can sustain the young trees until next week. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: A rota offers a slower, nonmagical fallback.

Records and tools - 15 minutes

Place: Seed shed

Read aloud

Lena warms seed trays under a blanket. A chalk diagram shows one water channel splitting into two.

Run this scene

Balanced flow restores blossom without sacrificing the nursery. Her repair attempt is at the root sluice. Put the method card and destination note on the table. Ask what the two objects suggest, then answer direct practical questions from their wording. The maker can trade tools for help carrying or recording them, but refusal never removes these public documents. The trail remains another route. A check, if your rules use one, changes the time or tidiness of the work rather than whether this evidence exists.

Choices

1. Proceed to Root sluice
2. Compare evidence at Nursery bank

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Root sluice. A missing method can be found again at Old pear tree; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Lena: Save frost-damaged saplings Lends supplies if a character helps carry or catalogue them. Public instructions remain available. Voice: Quick, exact words; point at tools while speaking.

Method diagram: The chalk split marks one-third nursery, two-thirds orchard; lift the root brace before turning. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Balanced flow restores blossom without sacrificing the nursery.

Destination note: Anja's work slate says ROOT SLUICE: return flow jammed. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Her repair attempt is at the root sluice.

An independent trail - 15 minutes

Place: Nursery bank

Read aloud

Tiny leaves stir on the nursery bank. Daro's shovel scrapes dry mud beside an old footbridge.

Run this scene

An independent visible route finds Anja. A witness provides the same destination. Describe the physical trail before asking for a decision. The witness tells what they actually observed and admits what they did not see. If the group refuses conversation, the physical route supplies the destination. Let a character compare the timeline and another trace the map. For a divided group, take one short turn per side, then reunite at the meeting; do not add another travel encounter.

Choices

1. Proceed to Root sluice
2. Compare evidence at Seed shed

If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Root sluice. A missing method can be found again at Old pear tree; no character skill is required.

People and evidence

Daro: Get a fair share of irrigation water Guides the party if they share a plan. If refused, points to the visible trail. Voice: Cautious, distinguish observation from assumption.

Physical trail: Wet boot marks leave the nursery and cross the footbridge to the sluice. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: An independent visible route finds Anja.

Witness statement: Daro saw Anja carrying a brace to the root sluice. Give it: Ask any direct question, or read the witness's signed statement if conversation is refused. GM inference: A witness provides the same destination.

The immediate problem - 20 minutes

Place: Root sluice

Read aloud

A pear root holds the sluice lever halfway shut. Anja's sleeve is wet to the shoulder; she has been trying to move it alone.

Run this scene

Caretaker Anja diverted the orchard's water to a nursery during a frost. She meant to reopen it, but a root jammed the return sluice. The tree spirit is awake and conserving its flowers. Reopening the shared channel restores both crops; a temporary watering rota saves saplings but postpones blossom. State the immediate stakes and offer both listed approaches. Before resolving action, ask who observes, who acts and who helps. Make any cost visible before a player accepts it. Avoid demanding a special ability or spell. When a plan fails, use the slower listed route and mark its time cost; people remain recoverable. Once the goal is safe, mark the immediate goal safe and continue. A refusal by the keeper cannot hide the marked safety instructions.

Choices

1. Brace the root gently, lift together, then divide the flow at the chalk marks.
2. Leave the root undisturbed and establish a well-to-nursery bucket chain.

If the group gets stuck

Leave the root undisturbed and establish a well-to-nursery bucket chain. Explain a five-minute delay before they accept it; mark the immediate goal safe when the people or resource are secured.

People and evidence

Anja: Admit the diversion without losing the nursery Explains both solutions when the party agrees to protect the immediate goal; the marked instructions are available regardless. Voice: Calm under pressure; admit the decision and its cost.

Safety marks: Lift the brace together; turn only after the root clears. The dry bank remains safe for bucket carriers. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Free the jam cooperatively or use the safe bucket route.

Encounter and party adaptation

Free the root while keeping the nursery channel supplied.

A delay leaves less time for the final repair or decision. Explain costs before resolving an action.

Brace the root gently, lift together, then divide the flow at the chalk marks.

Leave the root undisturbed and establish a well-to-nursery bucket chain.

Two pairs take observation and action tasks. Resolve them in two short alternating turns.

Mark the immediate goal safe after either safe approach; a setback costs time, not access to the next

scene.

The final choice - 20 minutes

Place: Old pear tree

Read aloud

The old tree speaks through the creak of two branches: "I have no flowers to spare while my roots thirst."

Run this scene

Balanced flow restores blossom without sacrificing the nursery. Free the jam cooperatively or use the safe bucket route. Reveal the method and fallback together. Ask the group which tradeoff it accepts and give every character a small contribution. Mark the complete method for the first choice or the fallback method for the second. A risky improvisation should inherit one of these outcomes after its cost is explained, rather than create a third unprepared lock. Keep the immediate goal safe. Return by the known marked route; no new location needs to be invented.

Choices

1. Show the restored two-thirds flow and promise a weekly shared inspection.
2. Offer a signed watering rota; ask for one symbolic blossom while the repair waits.

If the group gets stuck

Offer a signed watering rota; ask for one symbolic blossom while the repair waits. Mark the fallback method, keep the immediate goal safe and read the cost ending. Do not repeat a failed test.

People and evidence

Lena: Save frost-damaged saplings Lends supplies if a character helps carry or catalogue them. Public instructions remain available. Voice: Quick, exact words; point at tools while speaking.

Anja: Admit the diversion without losing the nursery Explains both solutions when the party agrees to protect the immediate goal; the marked instructions are available regardless. Voice: Calm under pressure; admit the decision and its cost.

Method diagram: The chalk split marks one-third nursery, two-thirds orchard; lift the root brace before turning. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Balanced flow restores blossom without sacrificing the nursery.

Fallback instruction: Buckets from the public well can sustain the young trees until next week. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: A rota offers a slower, nonmagical fallback.

Encounter and party adaptation

Persuade the old tree that the orchard can spare water for flowers.

The complete method preserves the planned service; the fallback preserves the immediate goal at a visible cost.

Show the restored two-thirds flow and promise a weekly shared inspection.

Offer a signed watering rota; ask for one symbolic blossom while the repair waits.

Work in two pairs, one following the method and the other preparing a fallback or record.

Mark the complete method for the first approach or the fallback method for the second. Both allow return and an ending.

Home and aftermath - 15 minutes

Place: Orchard gate

Read aloud

A small white bud opens above the gate. Children bring ribbons, and the caretakers begin a very public watering chart.

Run this scene

Choose a complete resolution or a resolution with a cost, then ask the group what happens next. Read the ending matching the selected outcome. Invite each character to add one ordinary detail to the aftermath, then ask the keeper for a concrete next action. Record who accepted the cost and which clues went unused. Spend the last few minutes on one enjoyable moment and one thing to change next time. Characters need not solve every optional inference to earn a resolved ending.

Choices

1. Describe who follows up tomorrow
2. Ask who helped whom and what it cost

If the group gets stuck

If no method was chosen, first confirm the immediate goal is safe, use the final fallback method and then read the cost ending. Record the unresolved work and give every character an epilogue.

People and evidence

Moss: Keep the spring fair from being cancelled Offers directions and ordinary transport for news of the outcome. Voice: Patient, concrete sentences; ask one practical question.

Anja: Admit the diversion without losing the nursery Explains both solutions when the party agrees to protect the immediate goal; the marked instructions are available regardless. Voice: Calm under pressure; admit the decision and its cost.

Endings

Complete resolution

The pear tree fills with white blossom. Anja opens the channel for everyone to see, and the nursery still drinks its share.

First secure the immediate goal at Root sluice. Use final method A at Old pear tree before choosing this ending.

Resolution with a cost

One blossom opens for the fair. The rest wait for water, while the town carries buckets and begins the patient work of freeing the root.

First secure the immediate goal at Root sluice. Use final method B at Old pear tree before choosing this ending.

Show the restored two-thirds flow and promise a weekly shared inspection remains for a later visit.

Handout answers

h-order: Water was diverted during a real emergency.

h-fallback: A rota offers a slower, nonmagical fallback.

h-method: Balanced flow restores blossom without sacrificing the nursery.

h-note: Her repair attempt is at the root sluice.

h-trail: An independent visible route finds Anja.

h-witness: A witness provides the same destination.

h-safe: Free the jam cooperatively or use the safe bucket route.

Clue reasoning

Water was diverted during a real emergency.: c-order

Proceed to Root sluice: c-note OR c-trail OR c-witness

Free the jam cooperatively or use the safe bucket route.: c-safe / marked safety fallback

Persuade the old tree that the orchard can spare water for flowers.: c-method OR c-fallback

Map descriptions

GM route atlas: Start at Orchard gate. Seed shed and Nursery bank are independent investigation routes; both connect to Root sluice, which leads to Old pear tree. All marked connections are bidirectional.

Return uses the known route to Orchard gate.

Root sluice - approach plan: At Root sluice, the marked entrance reaches the immediate problem.

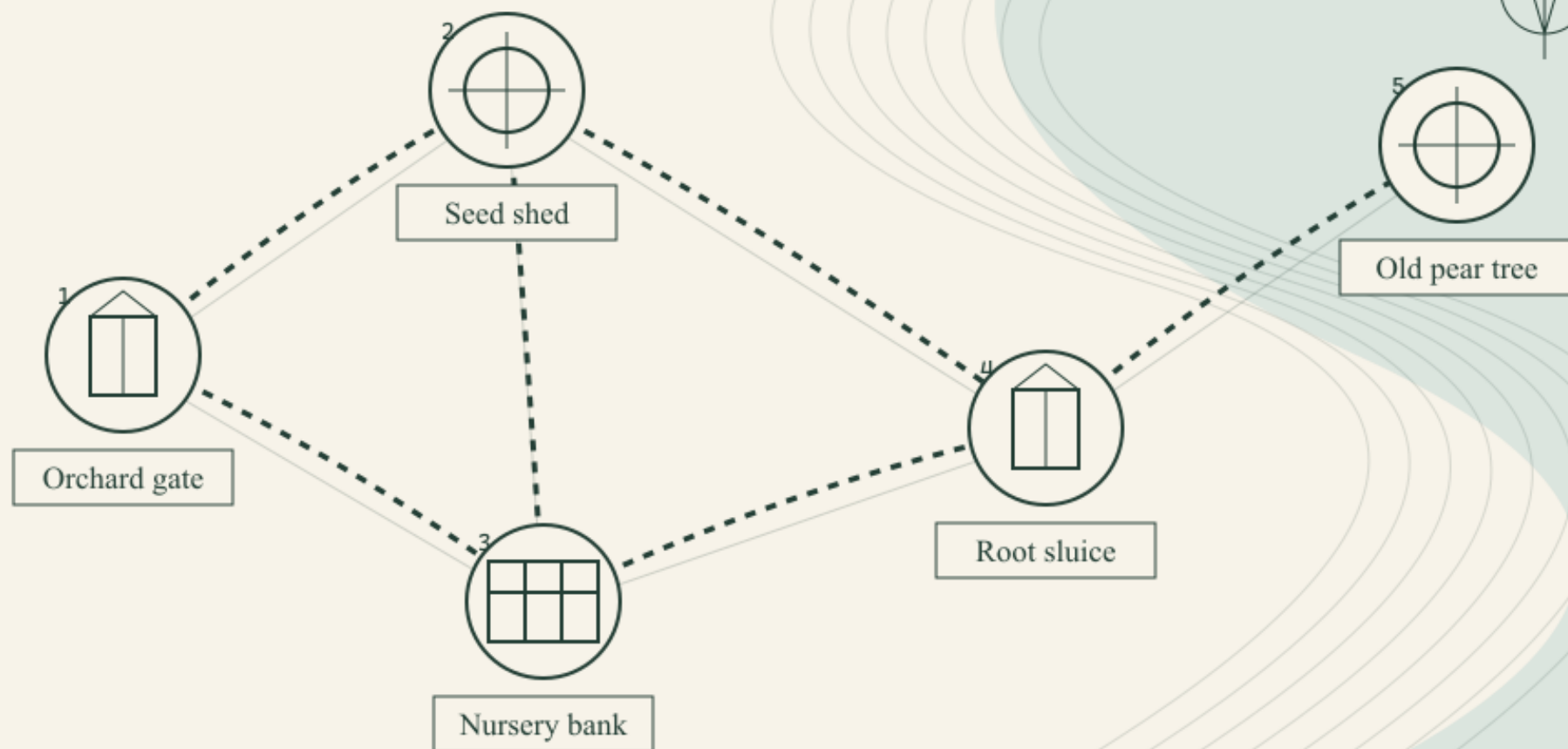
Approach A: Brace the root gently, lift together, then divide the flow at the chalk marks. Approach B:

Leave the root undisturbed and establish a well-to-nursery bucket chain. Both reach the onward route.

Layout is schematic, with no combat grid or movement scale.

Player route map: Public route map: Orchard gate connects to Seed shed and Nursery bank; either reaches Root sluice, then Old pear tree. Routes work in both directions. Retrace the route to return. No hidden information is marked.

GM route atlas

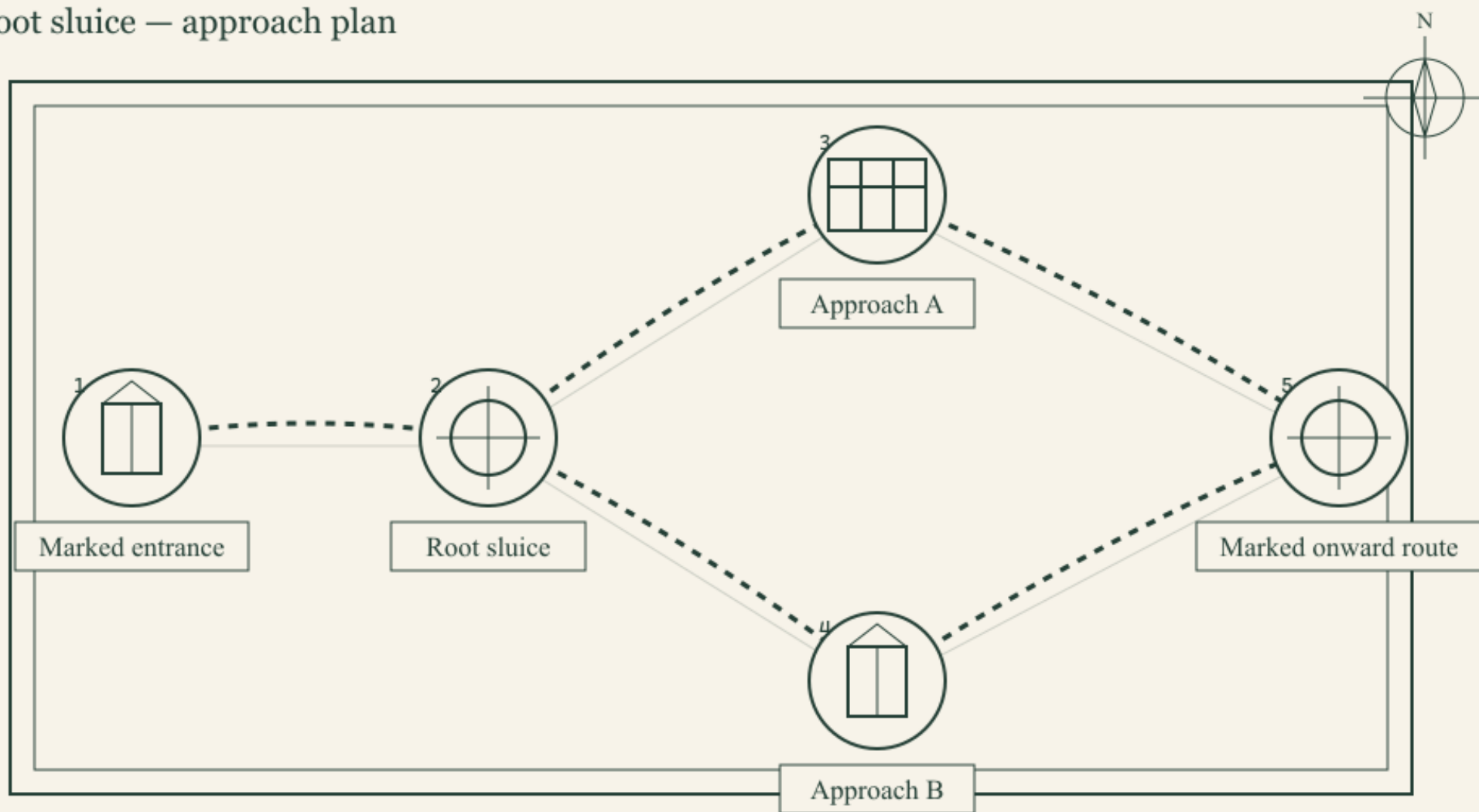


C-SAFE / immediate problem

C-METHOD or C-FALLBACK

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Root sluice — approach plan



Brace the root gently, lift together, then divide the flow at the chalk marks.
Leave the root undisturbed and establish a well-to-nursery bucket chain.

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