



Caring for Our Forests From Seeds to Trees



A seed of inspiration

Learning about the conditions and time required for trees to grow encourages us to appreciate forest habitat and inspires stewardship through hands-on action projects!

A Special Gift

Jamie turned five on a bright fall day but she didn't feel any different. She still couldn't reach the upper cupboard that hid the marshmallows.

"Five is big," said her father. "Big enough to find a special gift in the forest." They laced on their boots and entered the forest. They wound through the trees until they came to a giant Douglas-fir tree. Jamie's father reached up, picked a cone and placed it in Jamie's hand.

"This Douglas-fir cone contains a special gift. Can you see the little mice looking inside? Do you know what they are searching for?" Jamie peered at the cone.

In between each scale of the cone it looked as though the back legs and tail of a little mouse were sticking out. "They are not really mice, are they?" asked Jamie.

Father smiled, "No, they are called bracts. If you separate them and the cone scales, you'll find some small seeds. Plant some, and one will grow into another big tree."

Jamie looked from the small cone up to the top of the giant Douglas-fir tree beside them, "Wow as big as this?"

Her father nodded, "it will take a long time, but you're only five years old, so if you plant the seeds now you will be able to watch your tree grow as you grow. For a few years you will be bigger than your tree, but by the time you are ready to go to high school your tree will be taller than you."

They took the cone home and Jamie carefully separated it and took out several seeds. First she soaked them in water overnight. "Just like soaking in the winter rain", explained her father. Next Jamie filled a pot with sandy soil and carefully planted three seeds. "Now place the pot in the refrigerator, and we'll leave it there for a while," her father said.

"In the fridge?" questioned Jamie in disbelief. "Just like winter in the forest," her father explained. "Okay," said Jamie doubtfully and placed the pot at the back of the fridge behind the peanut butter.

For the first few days Jamie checked her pot. Nothing happened. After awhile Jamie forgot about the seeds in the fridge.



"Time to warm up your seeds," said her father a few weeks later. Jamie carefully placed her pot on the windowsill and watered it.

"There you are, little seeds. You've got everything you need. Now you can grow." But nothing happened. For a few days Jamie looked after her seeds, watered them regularly and waited. Still nothing happened.

Jamie got mad. She tipped out the soil and looked at the seeds. One had changed. It was fatter, and a small white point was sticking out. "Be patient, and don't disturb it again. The tiny roots need to cling to the soil to take in enough food and water to grow into a baby tree," said her father.

Jamie replanted the seed and tried to be patient. It was hard when there was nothing to see. The days turned into a week and the weeks turned into almost a month, before Jamie finally noticed a bump in the middle of the pot. She watered it carefully.

After a few more days Jamie gave a yell of delight. "Dad, look! I can see my tree." It wasn't a very big tree. It was just a tiny green sprout and it didn't look like a giant Douglas-fir tree. "It will," reassured her father. "Be patient and give your tree the food, water, and the sunshine it needs."

By the time Jamie was six, her tree needed a much bigger pot. By the time Jamie was seven, her tree was so big that she and her father ceremoniously replanted it in a sunny place in the back yard. By the time Jamie was eight, her tree was as tall as she was.

Jamie grew up and got married under her Douglas-fir tree in the back yard. Eventually, she and her partner had a son and named him Sam.

One bright fall morning, on Sam's fifth birthday, Jamie took him to visit his grandfather and they all stood looking up at Jamie's Douglas-fir tree. Sam's grandfather reached up, picked a cone and placed it in Sam's hand.

"Can you see the little mice?" he said. "Do you know what they are searching for?"

What will Sam do next?

Trees are a special gift

Trees in and around our community are important for many reasons: they provide oxygen, store carbon, stabilize soil, filter water, provide habitat for wildlife and people, and so much more.

Trees are the dominant plants that make up forests around the world. A great diversity of life is found within these ecosystems, from the soil of the forest floor up into the leafy canopy high above. Forest vegetation, animals, birds, insects, and microorganisms provide environmental, economic, social and cultural value to our communities.

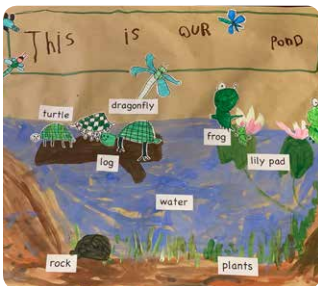
How can we care for these special places?



Tree Planting Tips

Planting trees is one way we can help improve our environment. It's easy to do – just follow these steps!

1. **Planning:** Research what native trees grow in your area and consider its shape, height, size at maturity, and the types of conditions it grows best in to determine the best growing spot.
2. **Preparing:** The best time to plant is in the fall before the soil freezes or in early spring, after the last frost but before the weather gets too hot. Follow the instructions for the tree you are planting to make sure it's ready for its new home.
3. **Planting:** Dig a hole 2 or 3 times wider than the container or root ball. The hole should only be as deep as the root ball.
4. **Caring:** After you have planted your tree be sure to give it enough water, mulch, and support. You may wish add some fencing to protect it from animals, such as deer, until it has become established.
5. For more on how to plant trees visit: treecanada.ca/resources/tree-planting-guide/ or check with your local tree provider.



Other Ways to Care for Forests

What are some ways we can care for the forest? What does forest stewardship look like to you? Here are some activities you can try. What are some others you can think of? Pick a project for yourself or as a group and take action!

- Create a forest by planting native trees and vegetation at your school, home, or in your community.
- Organize invasive species removal.
- Pick up litter in natural areas around your community.
- Map your local forest.
- Document your forest through the seasons and present using art, photography and/or written observations.
- Improve or build trails.
- Do stream enhancement and monitor water quality.
- Build and install bird and bat houses.
- Create and install interpretive signs.
- Track down sources of pollution, repair vandalism, and monitor human impact.
- Organize a community or school celebration of your site.

Additional resources from HCTFEducation.ca

- [Ideas for Supporting Biodiversity on School Grounds](#)
- [Exploring Biodiversity at Home](#)
- [Leap into Action](#)
- [Let's GO to the Forest](#)
- Let's GO to the Forest Cards ([download](#)) ([purchase](#))
- Trees of BC ID Cards ([Vol. 1 Conifers](#)) ([Vol. 2 Broad Leaves](#))