



## Tree Planting on School Grounds Guide

1. Establish your team – ensure you have the involvement and support of:
  - Administrative staff
  - Custodial staff
  - Teachers
  - Students
  - Parent volunteers
  - Community partners
  
2. Establish objectives - objectives may include:
  - Creating shade
  - Providing educational opportunities
  - Planting for energy savings
  - Creating wildlife habitat and supporting biodiversity
  - Decreasing air pollution
  - Combating the greenhouse effect
  - Controlling soil erosion
  - Recreational benefits
  - Aesthetic benefits
  - Creating a noise barrier
  - Planting a windbreak
  
3. Work with your school board:
  - Contact your school board to make sure you are acting in accordance with their policies, procedures, and business processes
  
4. Estimate your budget:
  - Create a detailed budget that will include the various phases of your project
  - Research all available funding opportunities
  
5. Build on existing resources:
  - Research and consult with any community groups, parent volunteers or any other interested groups and existing tree planting projects to gather ideas and resources

6. Select a planting site - planting location should:
- Complement existing natural features in the area
  - Not interfere with current uses of the space (think about all seasons-snow removal, summer use of the space, etc.)
  - Not block any paths, exits or sight lines
  - Be a minimum of:
    - 7m from buildings
    - 5-7m from other trees
    - 2m from benches, seating stones, picnic tables, fences, asphalt areas, walkways and play structures
    - 5-7m from running tracks
    - 4m from the base of slides
    - 6-10m from soccer/football field boundary lines
    - 6m from fire hydrants
    - 10m from flag poles
    - 3m from underground and aboveground utilities (overhead wires, underground pipes and cables)
  - Be reasonably close to a water source
  - Be appropriate for the objectives established (e.g. if shade is an objective, should be planted to cast shade on areas that are used heavily during the middle of the day)
  - Be approved by administration and maintenance/custodial staff
7. Site assessment – ensure that you assess:
- Underground utilities - Call Ontario One Call for utility locates
  - Amount of sunlight – is it full sun, part sun or shade?
  - Path of sunlight throughout the day – this is important for shade planning
  - Wind – staking may be required for particularly windy areas
  - Drainage – are there areas where water pools seasonally or after heavy rainfall?
  - Soil - do you have clay, silt, sand or loam? Is the soil highly compacted?
  - Foot traffic – how much activity does the area support?
  - Exposure to pollution – is the site near a busy road and exposed to air or salt pollution?
8. Species/plant selection – choose plants that:
- Are appropriate for the sun, soil and drainage conditions and other site characteristics identified during the site assessment
  - Are native (when possible) or at least non-invasive
  - Are tolerant to any difficult conditions (soil compaction, salt, pollution) they may experience. Native species suitable for compacted urban soils include:

- Trees: bur oak, hackberry, honey locust, silver maple, Freeman maple, Kentucky coffeetree, white spruce, Eastern white cedar, serviceberry (also comes in shrub form), grey dogwood (also comes in shrub form)
- Shrubs: serviceberry (also comes in tree form), grey dogwood (also comes in tree form), fragrant sumac, black chokeberry, common ninebark, common snowberry, highbush cranberry, nannyberry, pussy willow, red osier dogwood
- Have a mature size that is appropriate for the space
- Meet your specified objectives
- Are low maintenance (or have required maintenance that has been approved by those doing the work)
- Have a caliper size of at least 70mm (for trees) for planting in high traffic/vandalism prone areas, or at least 50mm for planting in more remote/low traffic areas of the yard

9. Organize your planting:

- Choose a planting date – the best times to plant are late April - early June or late September - November
- Gather tools and equipment (if students/staff are doing the planting):
  - Shovels
  - hose/watering cans
  - buckets
  - mulch
  - wheelbarrow
  - rakes
  - gloves
  - water/snacks
- Hire a contractor or get school board help (if students/staff are not doing the planting)
- Set safety and supervision guidelines and communicate these to students
- Review proper planting procedures and communicate these to anyone helping with the planting
  - See Oakvillegreen's How to Plant a Tree video:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6CSj-MjRj1M>
- Plant your tree(s) and shrub(s)!

10. Care for your trees:

- Install a wire mesh cage, tree guard or protective fence to protect the tree from vandalism, lawn trimmers and rodents
- Maintain mulch in a donut shape around the tree
  - Depth of 2-4 inches is ideal
  - No mulch against the trunk! Leave 6" between trunk and ring
  - Replenish mulch in the spring and fall
- Set up a tree maintenance schedule and get volunteers for the summer

- Water your trees regularly for the first 2-3 years
  - 2-3 times per week, depending on weather and soil drainage
  - In hot summer months, trees may need 20-30 gallons of water per week (10 gallons, 2-3 times per week)
  - In April/May and September to November, trees will need 10-15 gallons per week (6-8 gallons, twice per week)
  - Use a standard watering can (holds 2 gallons) or a hose (if fully open will release about 5 gallons every 2 minutes)
- Weed when necessary
- Stake if necessary – only if tree is very thin and is regularly exposed to high winds
  - Stakes should not be too tight and material should not cut into or girdle the tree
  - Stakes should be removed after 1 year
- Install educational signage
- Prune
  - Only prune dead, diseased or broken branches on new trees
  - Have the tree structurally pruned after 3-5 years to improve strength, remove low-lying branches and correct any other issues
- Tools required for maintenance (make sure they are accessible for volunteers):
  - Gloves
  - Watering cans/buckets or hose
  - Trowels (for weeding)
  - Access to outdoor tap (make sure outdoor tap is on and accessible in the summer)
  - Log book to record maintenance performed

#### 11. Curriculum connections

- Science and Technology
- Social Studies
- Math
- Language
- Arts

#### 12. Stewardship and responsibility

- Have you thought of turning your tree planting into a learning experience that would foster support and care of the growing trees?
- Have you decided on a monitoring protocol to use for newly planted trees?
- Have you informed the school community to ensure engagement, responsibility and long-term sustainability?