



PLANT A TREE GRADES K-8

OVERVIEW

Trees provide us with many benefits:

- Absorb air pollutants
- Replenish the atmosphere with oxygen
- Hold soil with roots, preventing erosion
- Provide habitat for birds and other animals
- Provide shade
- Serve as a windbreak
- Lower energy bills by providing shade and windbreak
- Provide beauty and enjoyment



[WATCH LET'S GO PLANT A TREE](#)

If you are working with older students, you can dive in a bit deeper and discuss how trees play a role in climate change mitigation:

<http://canopy.org/tree-info/benefits-of-trees/urban-trees-and-climate-change/>

Planting trees is an excellent way students can help to provide these benefits to their community. This activity will focus on the steps to plant a tree, the benefits of planting trees, and will enable the students to work as a group to develop a plan for a tree planting day at their school.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Watch “Let’s Go Plant a Tree” video. Ask the students to identify the steps of planting a tree. Write the steps down on the whiteboard.

Ask the students to identify areas in their community where trees have been planted. Have them list the benefits trees provide to people and wildlife in those areas.

Discuss possible impediments to planting a tree, such as buildings, power lines, pipelines, driveways, and sidewalks.

The Iowa DNR Urban Forestry Program has great information about planting trees:

<http://www.iowadnr.gov/Conservation/Forestry/Urban-Forestry/Tree-Planting>

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

Identify agencies and organizations within your community who can provide your class with tree saplings, tools to plant, and expertise. These are some great places to contact: local parks and recreation departments, garden clubs, local nurseries, the local Arbor Day foundation, local energy providers, and local environmental organizations.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources provides tree packets for free and grants for planting projects to schools across the state:

<http://www.iowadnr.gov/Conservation/Forestry/Urban-Forestry>

MidAmerican Energy provides free trees to homeowners in the spring:

<https://www.midamericanenergy.com/ia-res-trees.aspx>

Alliant Energy's "Branching Out" program provides community tree planting grants:

<http://www.alliantenergy.com/CommunityInvolvement/CommunityOutreach/BranchingOut/>

If you are doing this activity with younger students, see if you can partner with a classroom of older students who can serve as mentors for the project.

ACTIVITY

Tell the students they will be contributing to their community by planting several trees at their school. The students will be working together to identify areas in the schoolyard where the trees will be most beneficial. Then, they will plan a day to plant trees.

*Make sure to obtain permission from the proper individuals before planting any trees.

1. Divide students into groups of 3-5. Have each group go outside to identify ideal areas to plant trees in the schoolyard. Students can develop a simple grid map of the school grounds, in which they can use icons to identify locations of current trees, buildings, roads, sidewalks, etc. Then use a different set of symbols to map out potential locations for new trees. Remind students that trees can get very tall and their roots grow wide and deep. Each group should identify at least two places they think a tree could be planted.

“The best time to plant trees is in early spring, well before bud break. Bare-root trees can be planted as soon as soils becomes workable in early spring, but should be installed before buds swell and new growth begins. Besides early spring, container-grown and balled and burlapped trees may be planted later in spring, in early summer, or early fall. Plantings made in mid-summer (July and early August), late fall, and winter (November to early March) are more prone to failure.”

– Iowa Urban and Community Forestry Council

2. After the students have identified the areas, work with them to confirm whether or not that is a good place to plant a tree. Is it away from buildings and power lines? Will the roots grow into sewers, pipelines, driveways, and sidewalks? Consulting an expert is a good idea!
3. After the planting sites and details for the tree planting have been determined and confirmed, choose a day to plant the trees.
4. Plant the trees on the chosen day.
5. Students will continue to care for the trees once they have been planted. It is important that students learn about the types of trees they planted, so that they can give them proper care. The Community Tree Planting and Care Guide by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach provides great information on planting and caring for trees:
http://www.iowadnr.gov/portals/idnr/uploads/forestry/planting_careguide.pdf?amp;tabid=1273

Adapted from “Project Learning Tree Environmental Education Activity Guide.”