Tree Planting Checklist for Youth

Planting trees is one of the best things you can do to improve the health of the environment, people, and animals. Trees provide habitats for birds and other wildlife, prevent soil erosion, absorb pollution, create shade, release oxygen, make a beautiful addition to any landscape, and much more. Planting a tree is easy but making sure that it survives and grows to maturity requires planning, maintenance, and coordination with the people who will care for the tree long-term. This checklist will help you think through the steps needed to have a successful tree-planting event and healthy trees for many years to come. Work through these items with your teacher, club leader, or other guiding adult.

Assessing The Property

☐ Have you identified a location to plant trees?
☐ Do you have permission from the property owner?
☐ Have you talked to the person who maintains the land?
☐ Will current maintenance practices need to change to allow the trees to thrive?
☐ Have you called 811 or submitted a request at www.pa1call.org to identify where utilities are located?
☐ Are there any rights-of-way or emergency access areas (areas that can’t be planted by agreement/contract)?
☐ Does the local municipality have ordinances or regulations for where to plant trees, shrubs, and other vegetation?
☐ Do you have funding for purchasing trees, supplies, and maintenance?

Choosing Your Trees

☐ Does the local municipality have ordinances or guidance for which trees, shrubs, and other vegetation to plant?
☐ Do you know your USDA Plant Hardiness Zone?
☐ Have you assessed the location for planting conditions (sun exposure, soil moisture, soil type, etc.)?
☐ Have you identified stakeholder plant preferences (height, density, flowering, edible, fall color, messiness, native/climate appropriate, pollen)?
☐ Will you be partnering with a tree-planting group in your region to help to select trees?
☐ Have you contacted local nurseries to see what plant material is available and in what container (bare root seedlings, potted seedlings, larger-potted sapling)?
Making a Written Plan

☐ Do you know how many trees you need?
☐ Are you avoiding utilities, rights-of-way, or other areas that are not able to be planted?
☐ Will you use tree protection (tree shelters, tubes, spirals, cages, etc.)?
☐ Will the lawn mower or other grounds maintenance equipment fit between the trees?
☐ Do you know who will be caring for the trees?  □ First few months?  □ First few years?
☐ Do you have a backup plan for maintenance?
☐ Does your plan change over the summer when schools are closed?
☐ Do you have a tree-care plan that includes:
  ☐ Mowing
  ☐ Shelter straightening
  ☐ Watering/water access
  ☐ Herbicide application
  ☐ Weeding
  ☐ Replanting
☐ Does someone have PA Cat 23 pesticide applicator certification to legally apply herbicides and other pesticides and understands the laws for applying at schools?
☐ Will you involve the rest of your school/community (ex: other classes or grades, families, Master Watershed Stewards, local municipal representatives, media outlets)?
☐ Do you need participants (guardians) to sign waivers or permissions slips?
☐ Has your plan been approved by all stakeholders (property owner[s], manager, maintenance crew)?

Implementing Your Plan

☐ Have you scheduled a planting date? Rain date?
☐ Do you have enough time scheduled to plant all trees?
☐ Do volunteers know what to wear and bring with them?
☐ Do you have enough people recruited to plant the trees?
☐ Have you communicated a meeting location?
☐ Is there a plan for getting supplies to the site?
☐ Do you have the proper tools for planting (dibble bars, shovels, augers)?
☐ Do you have access to restrooms or need portable toilets?
☐ Are you providing food and water for participants?
☐ Do you have a first aid kit and emergency plans?
☐ Have you designated someone to give a tree-planting demonstration?
☐ Have you designated someone to oversee the event and participants?

extension.psu.edu
Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences research and extension programs are funded in part by Pennsylvania counties, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Where trade names appear, no discrimination is intended, and no endorsement by the Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences is implied.

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

The University is committed to equal access to programs, facilities, admission, and employment for all persons. It is the policy of the University to maintain an environment free of harassment and free of discrimination against any person because of age, race, color, ancestry, national origin, religion, creed, service in the uniformed services (as defined in state and federal law), veteran status, sex, sexual orientation, marital or family status, pregnancy, pregnancy-related conditions, physical or mental disability, gender, perceived gender, gender identity, genetic information, or political ideas. Discriminatory conduct and harassment, as well as sexual misconduct and relationship violence, violates the dignity of individuals, impedes the realization of the University’s educational mission, and will not be tolerated. Direct all inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policy to the Affirmative Action Office, The Pennsylvania State University, 528 Boucke Building, University Park, PA 16802-5901, Email: aao@psu.edu, Tel 814-863-0471.

© The Pennsylvania State University 2023  EE0987 | 5C11/23mpc