

# Putting down roots



**Build a bug hotel, a squirrel's fridge, a bird's perch, an air conditioner and a wonder of nature: plant a tree!**

Time | 1hr

Cost | ££

Location | Outdoors

Group size | Teams

## You will learn

### Value the outdoors

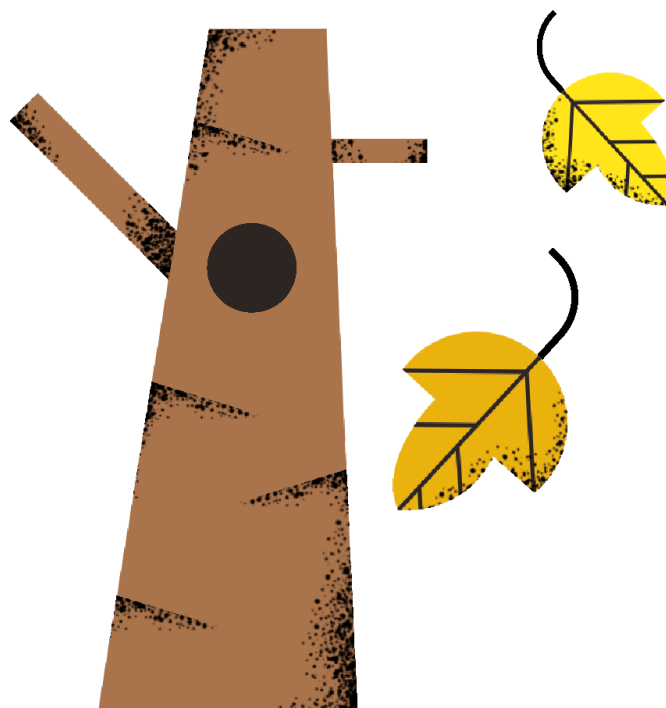
Enjoy being outside, feel comfortable in nature, and feel connected to the natural environment.

### Be a team player

Learn to work better with others, achieve shared goals, and put the team first.

## You will need

- Access to water
- Buckets
- Spade
- Garden fork
- Young trees



## Before you begin

- Get hold of some saplings (young trees) and find somewhere they can be planted. One way to do this might be to get in touch with a local nature charity, such as [Woodland Trust](#) or [Natural England](#). They're often looking for volunteers to plant trees for free in a specific location they've chosen. They might also be able to help you source saplings to plant in an area you've chosen. Your local authority will be able to help too.
- Bear in mind that the ideal time to plant a tree is between October and April, as this is the time of year where trees retain more moisture and need less attention. We recommend using the method described below to plant your trees, as it's thorough and will help your trees take root. It's known as 'pit planting'.
- Let everyone know what you're going to be doing so that they can come prepared and wear outdoor clothing and sturdy shoes. It might be a good idea to have some spare gear, like gardening gloves, for those who'd prefer not to get their hands too dirty. Make sure there's somewhere everyone can wash their hands after the activity.
- Mark out the planting area with sticks or flags to make sure the trees are adequately spaced out. Trees planted to form hedgerows should be about 30cm apart, whereas single trees should have about 2m between them.

## Running the activity

1. Before getting started, gather everyone together to see how it's done. Demonstrate or have an expert demonstrate how to plant the tree, using the information below to help.

*You could print off multiple copies of these instructions, so that each group can check to see what they're doing as they go. If you're saving paper, bring along one copy and read out each instruction for the groups to follow, repeating them and lending a hand where necessary.*

2. Split into teams. How many teams you have will depend on how many trees you have to plant. Small teams tend to work best.

*As they go, make sure teams share the workload. There's plenty to do in this activity, and using everyone's strengths and delegating tasks will make the process easier for each team.*

3. Each team should either pick a suitable spot for their tree or head to one that's been chosen already. Give each team a sapling and a bucket of water.
4. Submerge the root ball of each sapling in the water. Leave the tree to stand in the bucket until it's needed.
5. Give each team a spade and a fork. Dig a hole on the designated spot that's about three times as wide as the root ball and the same depth as the root ball. Use the fork to loosen any compacted soil, and the spade to dig it out and pile it close by. There should be plenty of space around the root ball when it sits in the hole.
6. Lift the tree carefully from the bucket and loosen some of the roots from the root ball. Try not to break any.
7. Place the tree carefully in the hole. The root ball should fit in the hole such that were the soil to be replaced, all of the roots would be covered. Dig them in a bit deeper if they don't all fit. Someone should hold the tree upright to keep it straight as their team refills the hole and pats the soil down around it.
8. Check that the tree is standing upright by comparing it to the stick or flag used to mark each area. If

needed, fit tree guards around the bottom of the trees to protect their bark and new shoots.

9. Water the tree well, with at least one full bucket of water.

*New trees will need to be watered in this way once every two days, especially during dry weather.*

10. Everyone should wash their hands and take a step back to admire their handiwork. One day, this could all be fresh, vibrant woodland...



## Reflection

Time	Activity
5 mins	There's an ancient saying that states: 'Society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in'. What do you think about this saying? It's thought to mean that planting a tree has greater benefits to future generations than the one that plants it.
	Planting trees probably felt good. That's because working outside as part of a team helps lots of us feel happier, especially if that environment's far removed from your usual habitats, like classrooms, home, the meeting place. Working together to achieve something for nature gives you and your team a shared fondness for the location and the tree you planted. You'll be able to think back on who dug out the soil, who stood the tree in the hole and who filled the soil back in. Are you going to come back together to water your tree? Do you think you'll come back in a few years, when it's grown some more?
	The landscape of the UK has changed greatly in the last few thousand years. The British Isles were once covered in trees and forest, yet now only 13% of the land is tree-covered. This is due to clearance of forest for agriculture and to build our homes and cities on. Unfortunately, by removing so many trees, we've damaged the habitats and homes of many other living things and efforts are being made to replant trees, not just for habitats but for their atmosphere-cleaning properties. Just 10 trees can offset one tonne of carbon in the air. By cutting down the carbon emissions in the atmosphere, we can begin to help nature rebalance. Save the world, plant a tree.

### Change the level of challenge

Difficulty will depend on the number of trees you need to plant and the number of people in each team. Smaller teams will have more things to do and might need to take a break if they're planting multiple trees.

### Make it accessible

Getting in touch with nature charities can help you source tools, saplings to plant, locations to plant them and help solve other accessibility problems you may face.

All Scout activities should be **inclusive and accessible**.

## Safety

All activities must be safely managed. Use the [safety checklist](#) to help you plan and risk assess your activity. Do a [risk assessment](#) and take appropriate steps to reduce risk. Always get approval for the activity and have suitable [supervision](#) and an [InTouch](#) process.

- **Outdoor activities**

You must have permission to use the location. Always check the weather forecast and inform parents and carers of any change in venue.

- **Poles and long objects**

Be careful when moving poles or long items. Take care if the ends are sharp. Have appropriate supervision for this activity.

- **Heavy and awkward objects**

Don't lift or move heavy or awkward items without help. Break them down into smaller parts if possible.

- **Gardening and nature**

Everyone must wash their hands after the activity has finished. Wear gloves if needed. Explain how to safely use equipment and set clear boundaries so everyone knows what's allowed.)

- **Animals and insects**

Be aware of the risks before interacting with animals. Be aware of anyone with allergies, and make alternative arrangements for them.

