Plant a Tree Activity

ParkLife Education Programme

Preparation time: 15 mins Suggested activity time: 30 mins

Curriculum links and learning outcomes
Personal and Mutual understanding
Mutual Understanding in the local and wider community
•   playing an active and meaningful part in the life of
the community and being concerned about the
wider environment.

The world around us - Interdependence
Pupils should be enabled to explore how living things
rely on each other within the natural world;

Place
 Pupils should be enabled to explore: Ways in which people, plants and animals
depend on the features and materials in places and how they adapt to their environment;

Bags of trees

You will need
Trees (whip/sapling)
Bags
Spades

Preparation
It is important to receive permission for tree planting
from the Park Manager before this activity can take place.
Once permission has been granted, the following steps
can be taken:

1. Check Tools:
   Check that spades do not have splinters or cracks on shafts.

2. Prepare trees for planting:
   Native trees are best to plant as they are acclimatised to our local environment.
   This is best for their flowering season and links to the local food chain. Northern
   Ireland has a large biodiversity and by planting native trees, we can help it
   continue to grow. Biodiversity is the term given for the variety of life in the world.

List of Suitable Trees:
- Hawthorn
- Elm
- Hazel
- Oak
- Alder
- Holly
- Scot's Pine
- Ash
- Cherry (Wild and Bird)
- Hornbeam

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3. Check where trees are to be planted on the site.

Some trees prefer wet, damp habitats whilst others prefer drier conditions. It is also important not to plant in an area that already has a lot of trees. Trees planted too close together will not receive enough sunlight, nutrients or water. Their roots will not be able to spread and the branches will stretch upwards to receive maximum sunlight, as a consequence, this will make them tall and thin and very susceptible to damage by strong winds.

Good quality soil

Waterlogged soil

4. Explain that there are risks on the site that they need to be careful of.

Such as tripping hazards where there is uneven ground, spades lying around, holes etc.

5. Show them a spade.

Ask what it is called, explain the use of the spade and how it should be used properly – when carrying it, hold it by your side with the blade beside your leg, do not swing or run with it.

6. Distribute Spades

One spade between two people should be adequate.

7. Distribute Trees

Distribute the trees and ensure that the roots are covered to prevent drying out- the other person in the pair can take the trees (about 5 per pair).

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Planting Site

1. When you arrive at the area where you will be planting, gather group together again into a semi-circle and explain what they will be required to do.

2. First of all, show them a **whip/sapling** – and ask if they can tell you what this is.

3. Explain that you will be **using a mixture of trees** – name a few varieties.

4. Holding the whip/sapling near the bottom – ask the children **why they think trees are important?** (oxygen, shelter, wildlife, furniture etc.).

5. Then pointing to the **root** – ask what this is?

6. Show them the main **tap root** and ask them why this is important? (to anchor the plant).

7. Then pointing to the **fibrous roots** – ask if they know what these are called? What are they used for? (to absorb water/nutrients)
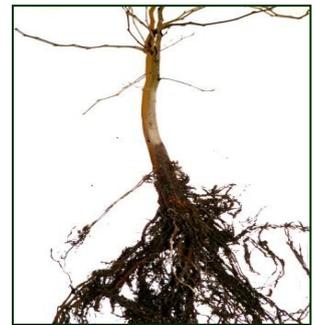
Whip

Tap Root

Fibrous Root

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8. Next, point to the **root collar** of the whip/sapling and point out the change in colour. What does this show? (it is the depth that the whip is needed to be planted to, not above or below this line, otherwise it will smother, make it unstable or it would struggle or stunt its growth. Frost would lift it out of the ground).

Note: Change in colour →
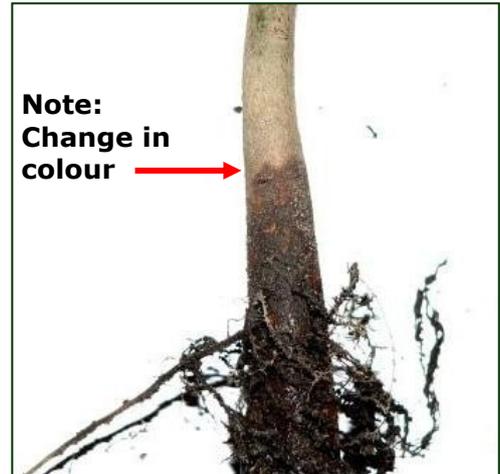
Root Collar

Trunk of Whip

9. Then point to the **trunk** of the whip/sapling and ask them what this is and what will it be used for (transporting the nutrients/water, stability, climbing etc.).

10. Next point to the **branches** – ask them what they are called. What uses will they have? (support, building nests in, swings, furniture etc.).

11. Then point to the ends of the branches and point out the **buds**. Ask what this will be and what will it become? (leave, buds, fruit/nut, explain that this is where the fruit of the tree will grow).

Buds

12. Also mention that **the leaves** are very important, ask why? (traps the sunlight, converts energy from sun into food for the tree using the pigment chlorophyll etc.)

Leaves

Planting

1. Show the children how to **use the spade correctly** when digging and wear appropriate footwear (use the back or front of foot, not the middle as protects foot).

2. For hedging/small whips – this is called **'notch planting'** – make a 'T' shape with spade in the ground, then lift up by leaning back on spade and move spade about to make opening but do not remove top sod completely. Put tree roots into opening and make sure roots are below ground level, then firm down with foot holding the tree at the correct depth – do the tree dance and then a final slight tug to make sure it is secured.

3. For **hedge spacing** – there can be planted in a double row in a W shape with 30cms between trees, facing each other horizontally and diagonally. It is best to plant the first row and then the second row.

4. With hedging – usually the stems are cut back with secateurs to encourage root growth.

5. If the tree has a **larger root**, make a square shape in the ground with spade and remove the soil and put to the side. If planting in a grass area, cut the turf sod in half and remove in two parts as it makes it easier to lift out and put to the side. Then place tree roots in the hole, being careful of the depth and root collar. Cover with the soil or the sods previously removed but turn the sods upside down, then do the tree dance, firm the sapling in and the final test is to give the tree a slight tug to make sure it is secured.

6. **Spacing of singular trees** – this is site dependant. Different locations follow different rules on spacing.

7. **Divide the group into 2 groups** – allocate a leader to each group to ensure that the spades are used correctly, the trees are planted properly and the tree roots are covered until ready for planting.

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