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Earth Action: Plan Before You Plant a Tree



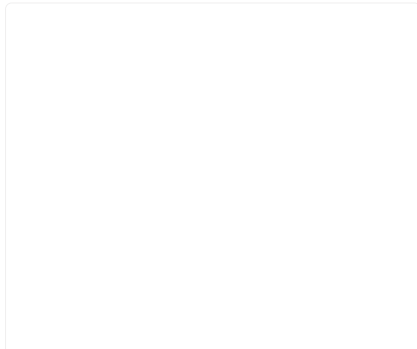
By [Gemma Alexander](#)

○ AUG 19, 2022 [earth action](#), [tree planting](#)



Like Earth Day, Arbor Day is in April; but the best time to plant a tree is in the fall. This year, Earth911 is honoring Earth Day's 52 years of inspiring action with 52 weekly actions for the Earth. Each week, we are sharing one action you can take to save resources, reduce waste, and make your own life more sustainable. This week, you can [invest in the earth](#) by planning a tree. That's not a typo – before you plant a tree, you need to make a plan.

Action: Plan a Tree



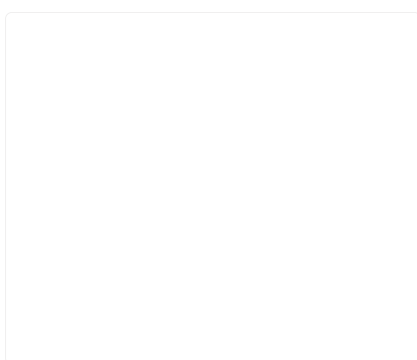
What Do You Think? ⋮

Are you considering moving because of climate change?

- No
- I'm researching my options to decide
- Yes

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Benefits of Tree Planting

Trees are awesome in so many ways. They provide immeasurable **ecosystem services** like improved **physical and mental health** as well as aesthetic pleasure (**trees are the view**) that can translate into improved property values. Trees help filter stormwater and remove pollutants from soil. They also provide shade on a hot day and create more comfortable microclimates to combat the **urban heat island effect**. Planting trees is **carbon sequestration you can do** yourself, and even though urban and suburban tree planting alone will never solve the climate crisis, the **urban forest** does make a difference, especially to local air quality. But the benefits of tree planting only accrue if the tree survives.

Before You Plant

A **study in Boston** revealed mortality rates of newly planted street trees that varied from 3% to more than 38%. The main determinant of a newly planted tree's survival was the tree planting contractor, which indicates the importance of proper planting technique for transplant success. So this week, spend some time planning ahead for your fall tree-planting.

First, pick a spot for your new tree and study its conditions. Learn what species thrive in your climate and how fast and big they grow so that you can **choose the right tree**. Native species are great for pollinators and birds, and they are naturally adapted to your climate. But if you are planting a street tree; if the soil at your site is degraded or has been heavily altered; or if your tree will be planted in a container, a **nativar** or horticultural variety may be more appropriate. Many communities provide lists of suggested tree species for street plantings. Some communities require you to choose from this list.

Once you've chosen the best species, look for a respectable retailer that sells quality plants. Especially if you have chosen a native tree or an heirloom variety, you might have to order your tree from a catalog and wait for shipping. Plan ahead so your tree will arrive after the weather cools but before your location's average first frost date. Check your schedule to set aside enough time to do the job properly at the right time. While you're waiting for your planned planting day, learn **proper planting technique** – dig the hole wide instead of deep, don't mix the soil with compost or put gravel at the bottom of the hole, and learn when it makes sense to prune the roots.

Planning for your tree will improve the survival odds for the tree you plant.

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Earth911 Inspiration: Nature's Colors of the Spirit



By [Gemma Alexander](#)

Gemma Alexander has an M.S. in urban horticulture and a backyard filled with native plants. After working in a genetics laboratory and at a landfill, she now writes about the environment, the arts and family. See more of her writing [here](#).

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