

Alberta's grade one seedling program

How to care for your new seedling

Seedlings are provided to every grade one student in Alberta annually.

Two species are distributed: the lodgepole pine and the white spruce. Both are native to Alberta and commonly found in our forests.



lodgepole pine

Lodgepole pine

The lodgepole pine is Alberta's provincial tree. It is a tall, straight conifer tree (it has cones and needles, not leaves). It is often used for posts and poles, and in our homes as doors, windows and furniture. Lodgepole pine trees also provide excellent habitat for insects, birds, deer and moose. Sometimes bears like to eat the nutritious inner bark. This tree relies mainly on forest fires to reproduce. The heat of the fire makes the hard cones open up, releasing the seeds. Lodgepole pines can live up to 150 years.

White spruce

This is a large conifer tree (cones and needles, not leaves). It grows up to 147 feet – that is about 42 grade one students tall! It can live 50 to 100 years on average but some live to 200. It is a very tough tree. Many birds and animals eat the seeds for food, its branches also provide cover and protection for wildlife. This tree relies on the wind and birds to disperse its seeds. The white spruce makes strong lumber and plywood which is useful for house building. Other uses include musical instruments, food containers, paddles and oars and shelving.



white spruce

Caring for your seedling

Choose a location with plenty of space – many yards are not suitable within towns and cities. Your white spruce could end up being 7 metres across, which is about the length of a full size pickup truck. It should be at least 10 metres away from any buildings or other structures. Be careful not to plant it under any power lines.

Plant your seedling as soon as possible. If you are not able to plant for a couple of days, keep the soil around the roots moist and store your seedling where it is cool and shady. Plant it when the other trees in your neighborhood are sprouting.

Lodgepole pines and white spruce enjoy sunny locations that aren't too wet. Dig a hole a couple of centimeters deeper and a couple of centimeters wider than the soil plug. There is no need to remove the soil around the roots. Place your seedling in the hole, as straight as possible, so that the top of the soil plug is about 1 to 2 cm below ground level. Replace the soil you dug out of the hole. Make sure there is good contact between the soil you are putting back in the hole and your seedling's roots. If you want to be like a professional tree planter, you can even gently step down on the soil around your seedling, to lightly pack it down.

Slowly give it just enough water to wet the soil, but don't make a puddle.

You can also plant it in a pot to grow outside for the spring and summer. Use a deep 10-inch diameter container or larger filled with potting soil. A potted seedling will dry out faster. A little plant fertilizer will help too. In the fall after the seedling has stopped growing for the season – around late September, you can transplant it. Remove your seedling and soil from the pot and place in a slightly wide and deeper hole in the ground, ensuring that there is good contact. Water your seedling.

If you don't have a large yard, then a forested area outside of your town or city is probably a better place to plant your tree. Or, you may be able to find a natural area in your community, also known as an urban forest. You can contact your municipality for direction on where you could put your seedling.

The cities of Edmonton and Red Deer have designated locations to plant grade one seedlings:

- [City of Edmonton Arbor Day Seedling Planting Sites](#)
- [City of Red Deer](#): you can plant it in any natural areas along the creek or river within the Waskasoo Park system. (City of Red Deer Arbor Day Activity Sheet, 2019).



Forest management



- Alberta's forested public lands cover over half the province - 35 million hectares (87 million acres or 350,500 km²). That is about the size of Germany!
- In Alberta the forests are owned by the Crown, which means they belong to all of us. They are managed by the Government of Alberta (Agriculture and Forestry), which grants certain companies the right to harvest trees, to make into lumber, pulp and other products.
- This provides jobs for about 18-thousand Albertans in many towns.
- By law, companies **must reforest** the areas they harvest.
- On average, forest **companies plant two to three trees for every one that they harvest**. That's more than 80 million seedlings every year.
- Government and industry work together on forest management plans that cover 200 years into the future! These will ensure there will always be trees for your great-great-great-GREAT grandchildren to enjoy!
- Less than **1%** of Alberta's forests are harvested each year.
- Albertans can cut their own trees down from designated areas to use for Christmas trees, firewood, posts and rails with a Personal Use Forest Products Permit, or PUFPP. Go to [alberta.ca/tree-cutting.aspx](https://www.alberta.ca/tree-cutting.aspx) for your PUFPP.

For more information regarding Alberta's forests, go to <https://www.alberta.ca/forestry.aspx>.

If you have a question regarding forest management in Alberta, email for-info@gov.ab.ca.