

Manual of Unskilled Labour

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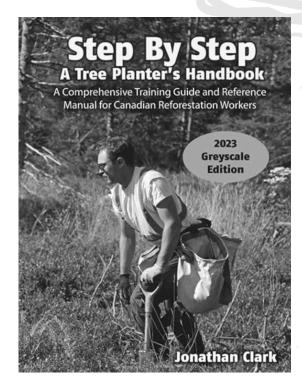
So you wanna go treeplanting

Just so you know: this industry is crazy. If you get hired as a treeplanter, when the work season begins, you'll be expected to show up either in a camp that's located in the middle of nowhere or, if you need help getting there, at an airport or remote bus station, carrying everything you need to survive away from the rest of civilization for a couple months. You probably have no idea who else will be in camp or what the vibes are like other than the word of your crewboss, who you very likely have not met after being hired a few weeks or months ago. Pretty daunting stuff.

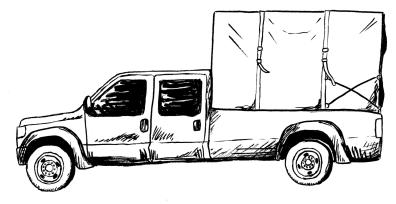
The best way to approach it is to have minimal or no expectations, because sometimes you roll up to camp and find out it's literally a gravel pit and most of the camp are **crusty** dudes who've been doing this job for longer than they've wanted to. In case you weren't told this repeatedly yet, planting is a really, really difficult job. Whether or not you brace yourself for this could mean the difference between burning out and leaving or bearing through it to have a unique and crazy summer.

Sometimes the situation is actually unbearable. Perhaps it's because you find that planting isn't for you, and there's no shame in that, it's not for everyone. Or perhaps it's because the company you're working for actually sucks. We're hoping this little zine will help you to determine whether or not this is the case, and because it's only 20-some pages, perhaps you'll even read a page or two.

Or, if you're a nerd, you could read this 466 page textbook.



If things are working out and you can power through, treeplanting is an amazing experience. You'll see some wild things, make some good friends, and if all goes well, leave with a lot of cool stories and a decent bundle of cash. So let's get you started!



Getting hired (skip if you done did it)

The best way to get hired is on referral from a friend who's completed at least one season, ideally they'll get you hired into the same company, or maybe bring you into a different one. Going into this job with a friend, even if you're both rookies, is considerably better than going in alone!

If you don't know anyone who's planted before and you somehow spontaneously decided treeplanting is for you, the best way to find a job is to join the biggest Facebook group for treeplanters, which is called King Kong Reforestation. Find the group, join it, message the recruiters that make hiring posts, or make a post yourself. Including a picture is a very good move, bonus points if you're outdoors, and/or have a dog (not a puppy). Here's an example that you can play with (try to make it honest):

• Hello! I'm hoping to find a job treeplanting this year. While I've never planted before, I am a hard worker who doesn't quit easily and believe I would be well-suited for the job! [I have worked other manual-labour jobs in the past, I enjoy the outdoors, and I'm looking to have an adventure this summer.] If you're hiring and I sound like a good fit, please DM me here and I'd love to get in touch. Thank you!



The hiring season is usually from December to early March, but there are always dropouts so you can usually get hired all the way up to the start of the season (late April). Some of the bigger companies (read: **rookie mills**) have more specific hiring practices, such as hiring portals on their websites or whatever, so you can also snoop around for those online. In any case, social media works just as well. Be persistent, and you should be able to get the job.

And then, all of a sudden, you'll get hired. Perhaps it was a random conversation with a friend of a friend, perhaps it was a phone call after an email exchange or Facebook post, probably you didn't even see or meet the person who hired you - but you just got hired! So now what?

getting hired getting hired

What do I need to (buy to) go planting?

Sourcing legend (bolded words on this page aren't in planting dictionary)

- · Thrift it!
- Specialty store (Surplus Herby's is probably your best bet)
- Get it cheap where you can (dollar store or whatever)
- Prioritize this one in your budget

The basics

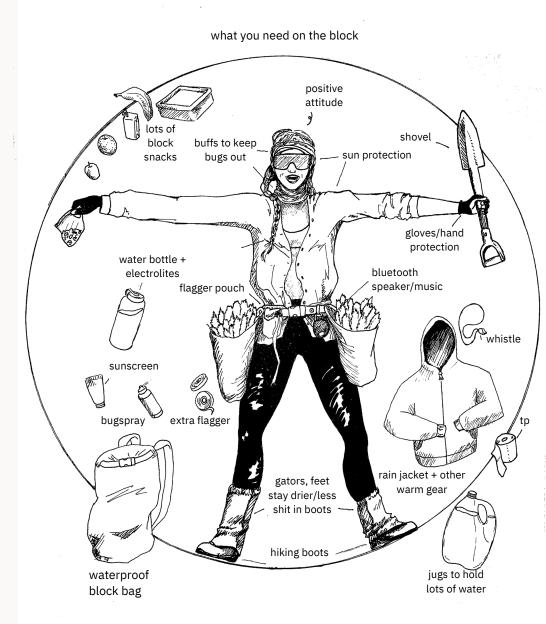
• Your clothes, your phone, your charger, your toothbrush, etc.

Camp life

- Tent
- Sleeping bag / blankets
- The **block**
- Spare shoelaces
- Watch
- Extra socks
- Notepad
- Pencil
- Work boots
- Shovel
- Planting bag
- Sun hat
- Gloves (work gloves, thin, 3-4 pairs)
- Planting shirts (long sleeve white dress shirts are best)
- Multiple tights and shorts -and/ormultiple cargo pants

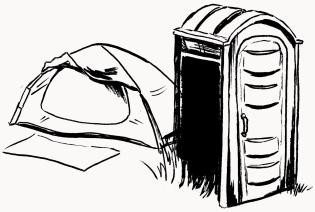
- Camping mattress + pillow
- Hoodies
- Tuke
- Rain jacket
- Sunscreen
- · Water bottle & tupperware
- Good block bag (ideally a drybag)
- Whistle
- Notebook
- Wool sweaters (marina) 2-3
- Nailclippers
- Wool socks

BONUS: Thermos, duct tape, tarp + rope (for your tent), bluetooth speaker, hot water bottle, books, laptop, portable battery, flashlight, sunglasses, gaters (which are denim ankle/shin protectors), buff (a flexible tube-shaped scarf), bugspray, vehicle cigarette-lighter power adapter (for charging your stuff in the truck rides, especially when you wake up late)



Camp Life

Most treeplanting is conducted out of camps, but sometimes you'll be working out of hotels instead. "Hotel shows" are rarer for rookies, and your crewboss will tell you what to expect, but it's always good to be prepared for both living situations.

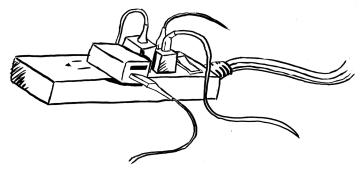


Setting up

- When you arrive at the campsite, the first thing you're going to want to do is find a good place to pitch your tent. Arriving early really pays off, as there are lots of things to consider:
- Surroundings: Am I beside a danger tree? Am I in a depression that will fill up with water when it rains? Are there trees I can tie my tarp to?
- Ground: Is it rocky? Is it level? If the ground in your camp is particularly bumpy or rocky, a classic trick is to ask for tree boxes (remember the trees you plant come in wax-lined boxes) so you can put them under your tent. This helps a lot, and a planting camp has an infinite supply of tree boxes.
- Privacy: Is being in earshot a dealbreaker?
- Proximity to facilities: Near showers > near shitters. But being really far from either of them often isn't ideal. It's also nice to not have to walk for more than a few minutes to get from your tent to the mess tent. Also a good move to figure out where the cell service/camp wifi signal is strongest, assuming either of those are a thing.

Etiquette

• There are lots of little things you can do to make camp life better for everyone. The longer the season drags on, the more people get crusty when these little things aren't observed. Highball that etiquette!



- Chargers: Camps will always have a charging station, basically a rat's nest of cables and extension cords that you can plug your phone/etc into. Unspoken rules go like this: You can unplug someone else's charger if it's not being used. You can plug your phone into someone else's charger if it's not being used, but you run the risk of them coming later and swapping out your phone with theirs. You can always rearrange chargers to make yours fit on the power bar, so long as you don't leave any unplugged in the process. You can sometimes unplug someone else's phone when it's at full charge and plug in yours, if you know whose it is. Do not mix around charging cubes and chargers that aren't yours to make it work for you, and by all the gods don't be stealing people's chargers.
- Dishes: Camps will either have a paid dishwasher or require that everyone does their dishes in a three-basin dishpit (wash, rinse, sanitize). If it's the latter arrangement, then put simply: Don't leave them around unwashed, don't hoard them in your tent, do wash them well.

camp life



camp life

- Showers: Many (most?) people use the showers every day, so if you're one
 of those people and there's a line, generally try to keep it to 5 minutes. If
 you like longer showers, maybe wait until after the rush. DO NOT PISS IN
 THE SHOWER. Especially the outdoor ones. If you don't want people to
 borrow your soap/etc, take it out with you. You don't have to get upset
 when someone forgets their socks, save that rage for bandages or
 condoms.
- Dry tent: Camps will also always have a "dry tent", this is a tent that is
 specifically set up to dry off wet clothing and gear between shifts. This
 one is pretty simple: Don't hog the best spots for drying (like in front of the
 fan or the fire), check on your stuff so you can take it out when it's dry,
 and remember that it's not a clothing swap.
- Dogs: Doggos and pupperinos are a common sight in a planting camp. If
 you bring yours, you best be sure that they get along with other dogs,
 don't bark all the time, and respond to orders like "get out of the mess
 tent" or just "sit" (when there are big trucks driving around). The general
 rule in a planting camp is that dog owners are obligated to pick up any and
 all dogshit on sight.



Other stuff:

- o Don't hoard the treats when you make your lunch in the morning
- If there's wifi and you want to make big downloads, do it overnight
- o Try to be on time when you go to the trucks in the morning



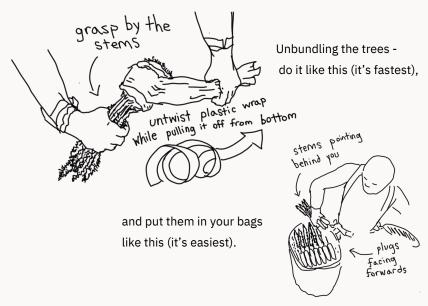
Parties

Planting parties are a wild time. You'll almost definitely experience a box-fire for the first time. They often go past 3 AM. There's a lot of drugs. For that last one, we'd recommend you take a look at our "harm reduction" zine that you can find on our website. Doing drugs is fun and fine so long as you're responsible about it. Two things to note - one is that many companies have a "zero tolerance" policy, which is a lazy way to wash their hands of responsibility, they also use it as a pretense to fire people. The second thing isn't news to the non-dudes, and that's to beware of creeps, and use a buddy system whenever possible. We'd also recommend referring to our zine "sexual assault prevention in bush camps" on our website.

So you want to ball out

How to plant good (enough) trees

So you just drove, or took a helicopter (weeeee), or maybe just walked to the place you're supposed to plant trees. If this is the first time, you have what's called a "pre-work", where the client (the company that hired your employer to plant the trees) or just your crewboss or whatever, goes over the details (density, specs, cents per tree, safety info). You are then dropped off at your cache - a bunch of boxes of trees covered by a tarp - beside your piece (your section of the land that you plant). You can leave all of your shit at the cache, except your bags and shovel. Time to plant some trees. Open a box of trees, grab a bundy, and start loading up your bags. Are your trees frozen? You can leave them in the sun to dry, but also if it's a hot day put your water bottle in with the frozen bundies - it's a good move.

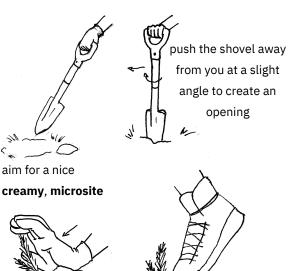


Planting a lot of trees is the art of finding where the line is for bad trees, and skimming it ever so beautifully, like an, uh, ass-em-tote, or whatever fancy word is used by skilled labourers. But before you plant good enough trees, you need to know how to plant good trees. This comes down to technique.

Don't plant open-holed-air-pocketed-shallow-j-rooted-leaners in the duff.

Flagging - intermittent vs pre-flagging - Flagging is tearing flagger tape, which is brightly colored plastic that comes in a roll, and throwing it beside your trees to help you visualize where you've planted. Flagging every tree is sometimes necessary, both when you're just starting as well as if you're in land with a lot of tall green growth. Ideally, you want to be flagging between your trees (tree-step-flag-step-tree) and get into a rythme. Some planters "pre-flag", meaning they tear off a strip of flagger before reaching for their tree, which often results in the flag being partially buried with the tree. This method is mostly useful when it's windy.

How to plant a good tree - your crewboss should be the one to show you this, and then you'll have to figure the rest out by doing it, because you straight up can't do it by looking at these pictures, no matter how nice we tried to make them. But we hope they give you a decent visual conception.



put the tree in the hole along the shovel, using two fingers against the **plug** so it doesn't bend, slide the tree in and pull the shovel out simultaneously

close the hole using your hand (hand close), or your foot (kick close)

there are many ways to close a hole, you'll find the way that works best for you! Just make sure you have a good technique so you don't get **tendo**...

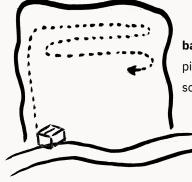
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Piece management

After you get the technique of planting a tree down to a rythme, the most important variable in planting a lot of trees comes down to how you manage your "**piece**" of the land. It all comes down to minimizing the amount of time you're spending walking without putting a tree in the ground. The essentials are:

Bagup size: If the land looks difficult and you're unsure, or if your piece looks small, start with a small bagup so that you can get in there and assess it. You can adjust your bag size after you know what you're up against, the risk of too small a bagup in fast land is a few minutes at most, the risk of a big bagup in terrible land can drag into well over an hour.



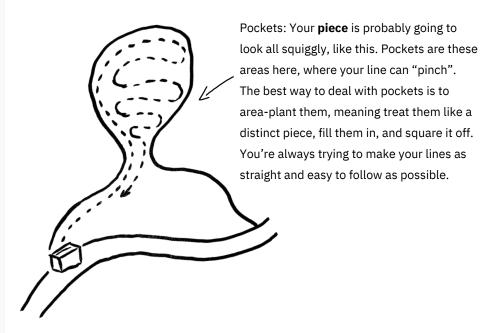


backfilling: When you think of your piece, what comes to mind is probably some kind of square, like this.

So here's the thing, it's never like that. But it's super useful to imagine, because you want to make it look like that, which is called "squaring it off",

after that it's easy to just do straight lines back and forth. backfilling is as the name suggests - you plant the back of your piece as much as possible, trying to bring the

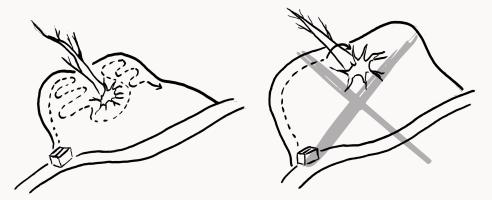
the back of your piece as much as possible, trying to bring the **backline** as close as possible to the **cache**. One of the key parts of backfilling is estimating how many trees you have left, and how many trees it would take to plant a line back to your cache, because when you start to run out of trees you want to follow your own line back to your cache so that you plant your last tree as close to the cache as possible, and ideally right beside your very first tree. This will ensure you minimize your time **deadwalking**, meaning walking in your piece without planting trees.



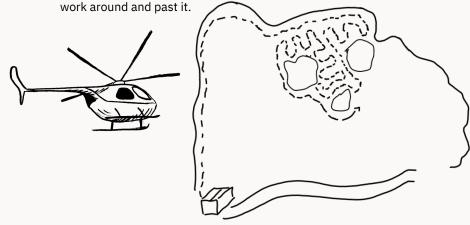
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Obstacles: You'll often run into obstacles on the piece, whether it be a big ol' **slashpile**, or a giant log, or whatever. There are many ways to deal with obstacles, so we'll go over a few different scenarios.

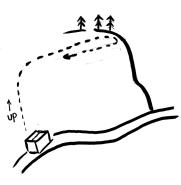
Middle of the piece: For this kind of obstacle, you just want to plant
around it. If you run into a log or something, don't climb over it just to
make sure your line runs straight - that's a waste of time. You can afford
to have a bump in your line if it means gaining efficiency in other areas.



• Clusters: If there are several obstacles together, you'll want to treat it like a pocket, area-plant it, and then treat the whole thing like one big obstacle for your future lines and plant around it. When there's a shitty part of your piece like this, the best strategy is to get rid of it, and then

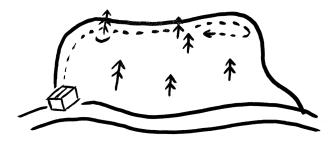


Slopes: A slope can completely change the way you work your land. You always want to be working side-to-side on a slope instead of up-and-down. This means that sometimes, instead of backfilling, you're side-filling, which may seem counterintuitive but is actually the most efficient way to work. If it's even somewhat steep, the slope of the land takes priority over how best to fill your piece.



• Prepped land: Similar to slopes, if you encounter prepped land, like **trenches**, you want to work them up and down. Here's the thing though, often you'll have complete psychopaths operating the trench machines and they'll go up and down on steep slopes. So at that point, you have to make a call as to what works best for you/the land.

• Fill-plants & high green: Fill plants are when there are already trees in the land, either previously planted or "naturals", and you have to plant around them. High green is when there's lots of other vegetation, and it's tall and makes it hard to see. In either case, not much to say except use lots of flagger to try to make sense of it, and also laughing insanely from time to time helps. Remember to bring a raincoat on these days especially, because if it rains and you're surrounded by wet leaves it's impossible to stay warm.



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Time management

Getting a watch is actually pretty key to tracking your efficiency (your phone is not a watch). That's a do. Here are some don'ts:



- "Caching" Planting is hard. When you've spent all day moving around making your bags lighter, and you get to the cache to sit down and have a sip of water, it's pretty hard to clip on heavy bags and get back into the land. Caching is when you chill at the cache. The best way to avoid this is to get in the habit of bagging up immediately, before you take off your bags or grab a snack. This is the way you maximize your planting, but even if you end up chilling, you'll be able to jump back in the moment the inspiration hits you.
- Improper bagup sizes: There's a strange tendency related to caching, which is when planters try to hold themselves hostage in the land with a huge bag up, thinking it will force them to plant more trees. It doesn't. But it does tire you out and make things worse. Try to make sure your bagups are maximum one hour long, if they're longer than that, consider taking less! This is especially true in more difficult land. Why bother carrying around all that excess weight for so long?
- "Rookie staring": That's the term given to when you basically stare out into the distance and disassociate for a few seconds/minutes. It happens to the best of us. The **block** is a difficult place to be when you've got things on your mind. As much as you can, try to catch yourself doing this and refocus on the job. If this isn't working, remember to be gentle with yourself this is a hard job. Mostly everyone has mental health issues of one kind or another, and if you're spending a lot of time out there staring into nothingness, this might mean your lack of motivation is something that has to be solved outside of the block. There's a handy zine on mental health you can find on our website.

trade secrets

- Injuries: It should be obvious that when you think something is hurting stop immediately. But it's hard to know sometimes if you're getting injured or if you're just sore because the job is so fucking hard. One of the best ways to test this is to stop for a few seconds and try simulating the motion you've been doing all day, but slowly. If you're getting **tendonitis** or another common injury, at some point in that motion it will flare up a bit, sort of like a spike in a pain curve - bloop. If you're sore it will just be sore. If there's a bloop or if you think it's an injury, stop planting. Simple as that. The stakes get higher the more trees you plant, because missing one day, or two, is a lot of money. But letting an injury persist just so you can finish that bagup could mean missing a week, which is devastating. However, there is a way to keep planting (most of the time)! It's called ambiplanting. Basically it just means switching your shovel hand and your tree hand, because the ergonomics of switching often relieve the strain from whatever you were doing to cause the injury. Ambiplanting is difficult, but often far less difficult than people think, and it's an invaluable skill to learn if you want to maximize your planting days.
- Music: It can often be extremely motivating to use your phone (and perhaps a bluetooth speaker) to play music all day. If you bring out your phone, putting it in airplane mode pretty much doubles your battery life. If you use headphones, only use one ear, because wasp nests and bears.
- Maintaining energy: If you want to ball out, you need to have energy. Best

way to do that is get a good sleep. Everything about consistently balling is hard, and so is choosing

to not stay up to hang out with those cool people, watch that last episode of a show, or whatever. Get ye snoozin! And of course caffeine helps.

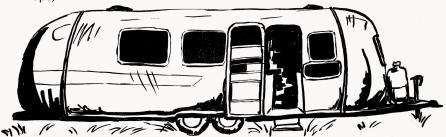
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...am I getting screwed?

Wage theft

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- Bonuses: Bonuses are sketchy. Usually called stuff like "vehicle equipment bonuses" or "performance bonuses," they allow companies to withhold part of workers' pay under vague conditions. The company can easily cite minor stuff like a missing logbook entry to justify reducing or eliminating bonuses. Since they aren't considered wages under employment standards, they're hard to contest. Keep an eye out for shady promises of compensation.
- Overclaim Tally Reduction: Your boss can legally adjust your pay if they
 prove you've overtallied (claimed more trees than you planted), but a lot
 of them dock an entire crew's (or even camp's) pay when they find a
 discrepancy, even when they don't know who dunnit. This is wage theft.
 Also, planters must be topped up to at least minimum wage if they didn't
 make enough from planting to make minimum wage over the same time
 period (which includes overtime, and is calculated over a pay period, as
 opposed to over a day). However, the calculation must include portal-toportal hours.
- Portal-to-Portal Top Ups: Your work hours start when you leave camp and end when you return, not just at the planting site. Any employer failing to include travel time in wage calculations is committing wage theft. Any hours beyond eight per day must be paid at time-and-a-half minimum wage. Oh, and if you plant for more than 12 hours, you're looking at double piece rate, this applies to all planters (even if you don't need topups)



- Overcharging Camp Fees: Workers often subsidize their campsites
 through fees. In BC there is a limit, the maximum chargeable amount is
 \$25 per workday. Any higher charge is wage theft. Some camps offer
 meals on days off, sometimes with reduced fees, but camps without fees
 typically incorporate those costs into tree prices.
- Shifting Tree Prices: Your per-tree rate must remain the same from when you are told on-site. If your employer later reduces the rate, this is wage theft. You can't tell a guy you'll pay him \$80 bucks to plow your driveway and then hand him \$20 when he's done.

Worker Rights

Hygiene, OH&S, and Workers' Comp: You are entitled to proper hygiene facilities, including running water and hot showers (such luxuries for us humble peasants). Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) laws guarantee your Right to Know, Participate, and Refuse unsafe work. Workers' Compensation covers injuries regardless of fault, although companies often try to stop you from using it so they keep their premiums low, and do sketchy shit like get you to go to their friend who's "basically a doctor" (wink wink). Know your rights and demand proper treatment.

Rookie mills

Rookie mills are companies whose workforce is overwhelmingly made up of rookies and/or second year planters from the same company. Most of the big companies are rookie mills. They often have lower tree prices and worse camp conditions than their smaller competitors, because their business model is based on having a workforce of people who have no reference point for industry norms. Chances are if you just got hired you're in a rookie mill. Keep in mind - you should never be required to purchase your own flagging tape or silvicool/tree tarps. Keep an eye out for wage theft and take care of each other!

For more information on your rights, check out our "Worker's Rights" zine on our website.

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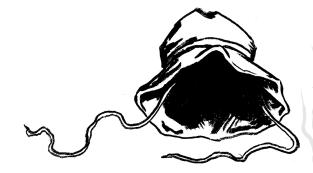
Dictionary of planting lingo

- Backfill planting the back of your piece first
- Baller someone who plants a lot of trees
- Ballerboard public tallies of who planted the most trees. Sort of like how
 Walmart employees have to chant "Walmart is the place for me", except
 people defend it because they invest their egos into it
- Block A distinct swath of land that has to be planted with specific density/specs, for a set tree price, divided into pieces for each of the planters. One or more crews will be assigned to each block.
- Block close: When you're trying to finish your block to move to another one.
- Bundies the nickname for the individual units of plastic-wrapped trees
- Cache The pile of boxes covered by a tarp where you drop of your lunch/etc and refill your trees
- Caching chilling at your cache, sometimes with others
- Cream show, -y, -ed out A creamshow is super fast land, creamy
 means soft plentiful soil without rocks or roots, creamed out is when
 someone plants all of your good land. But it's also used for other things
 ("someone creamed out all the block treats!")
- Cocks It's actually "Caulks", but if you've heard people say the word this
 is what it sounds like. Anyways caulks are specialty boots made of rubber
 with metal studs on the bottom, really good for wet weather/land
- Crusty Aggravated, jaded, cranky
- Danger tree a tree that is in imminent danger of falling over
- Deadwalk Walking in the land without planting trees
- Density the number of trees at any given point in a 4 meter radius. So
 when they say you're planting "7's", or "8's", or "9's", that means that
 many trees per 4 meter radius at any given point on the block, plus or
 minus 1 tree is always okay.
- **Dry tent** the place you put your wet clothes to dry them (overnight)
- Duff(shot) duff is a layer of fluffy useless shit that sits on the ground. A
 duffshot is a tree planted in the duff
- **Ferts** fertilizer packs, which are sometimes required to be inserted with the trees, for an additional centage. Also: they suck to plant.

- FIST If you hear someone say "the fist", they're probably referring to the
 acronym for Fiberglass Insulated Seedling Transport, which is a specialized
 sealed container for storing trees that is mounted on the bed of a pickup
 truck, and used to extend the refrigeration time of unthawed seedlings
- Hotel shows Planting out of a hotel, as opposed to a campsite
- Land Raw, Burns, Fills, Trenches, Mounds, Rips raw is unprepped land, burns are when a fire has passed through the land, fills are when there are a lot of naturals or when the land has already been planted but needs more trees. The others are types of preparation: Trenches are in lines, mounds are scattered holes with piles of dirt beside them, rips are elongated holes.
- Lines Ghost, Cut, Back, Side Ghost lining is when someone plants an incoherent line, sometimes without flagging, in a random direction. Cut line is the first line in from the cache, or a boundary line your crewboss flags to indicate the boundary. Back line is the lines you fill at the back of your piece, side lines usually refer to your side boundaries, sometimes involving another planter's cut line. PB Personal best, meaning the most trees you've ever planted in a day.
- Microsite the best little spots to plant trees
- **Naturals** Trees in your piece that nobody planted they just grew there naturally. Crazy right?
- Piece The section of the land that you plant
- Plotcord nobody knows what this is
 - Okay fine it's a 4 meter rope you use to check density
- **Plot** a small area of the land chosen to check trees, you use a plotcord to make a circle with a 4 meter radius and look at all the trees in the circle
- Plug the roots/dirt part of a tree sapling
- **Reefer** The giant storage unit for trees that is towed around in transfer trucks, it looks like a shipping container, except it's refrigerated to keep the seedlings cold (the trees are kept cold to simulate the winter freeze)
- Residual Little patches of the forest that weren't cut and remain in your piece

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- Rookie Mill A company whose workforce is made up of mostly rookies and/or second year planters from the same company. Most of the big companies are rookie mills.
- **Shifts** Unlike in the real world, where a shift means 9-5 or whatever, when you hear shift it usually means the cycle of days on (so a shift can be a three day span)
- Slash/slashpile slash is logs and stickmat that's left on the block. A slashpile is a big ol' pile of the stuff, which will in most cases be set on fire in the winter for some reason
- Shnarb Like slash, except its full of all kinds of stuff. If the piece is a
 mix of logs, sticks, and greenery, it's schnarby as hell
- Slutting Planting shitty trees
- **Stashing** hiding trees that you didn't plant. Your crewboss can use math to figure out if you're doing this.
- Stick mat overlapping sticks and branches useless to try planting in there in most cases
- **Tendo** short for tendinitis a common injury involving strained tendons
- Treeline refers to either the actual treeline on the edge of your piece, or the act of planting your excess trees along the edge or your piece



This zine was written by TWIG's media committee.

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