

Introduction

The job is physically demanding. Combine that with the rough terrain of a recently logged cut-block and the extreme motivation of most planters (paid by the planted seedling) and you have a recipe for injury.

Critical Task Inventory

- Working and Walking in the Bush
- Crossing Slash Piles or Windrows
- Working in Burns
- Stock Handling Rash
- Proper Equipment Set-Up
- Warm-Up and Stretching
- Gripping a Shovel
- Screefing
- Looking After Your Feet
- Looking After Your Hands
- Hydrating Your Body
- Preventing Illness
- Ergonomics

PPE and Clothing Summary

Image	Description	Standard
	Sturdy Footwear	Required
	CSA Approved Hard Hat	Required on Some Sites
	CSA Approved Safety Glasses	Required on Some Sites

PPE and Clothing Summary (continued)

Image	Description	Standard
	Rain Gear	Required
	Fox 40 Whistle	Required
	Warm and Dry Clothing	Required During Spring and Fall
	Bama Socks Thick socks	Recommended
	Bug Jacket	Recommended
	Sun Hat	Recommended
	Personal Hydration System	Recommended
	Small Water Bottle	Recommended
	CSA Polarized Glasses	Recommended
	Padded, Rubber, and/or Gripper Gloves	Recommended
	Long Sleeve Shirt	Recommended

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Safety Equipment Summary

	Insect Repellent	DEET is Recommended
	Saline	Recommended for Contact Lens Wearers
	Personal First Aid Kit	Recommended
	Antibacterial Gel	Recommended
	Duct Tape	Recommended

Working and Walking in the Bush

It is not unusual to have absolutely no idea where on earth you are, so take the necessary precautions to ensure your safety.

Controls

Buddy System

Workers are normally required to work with at least one other person. Always know where your partner is and never wander off or work alone.

How it Works

- Your planting partner is normally your check-in buddy.
- If you plant alone, your check-in buddy should be somebody in the same general area.
- Planters are responsible for arranging their own check-in buddy.

Working and Walking in the Bush

Controls (continued)

Have at least visual contact with your check-in buddy three or more times throughout the planting day.

Report to the supervisory staff if you have not been able to see your check-in buddy for any significant length of time that raises concern.

Leave the workplace each day with your check-in buddy.

When vehicles are employed, do not allow the trucks to leave the worksite at the end of the day without your check-in buddy.

Traveling by Foot

Quite often, when access has deteriorated trucks have broken down, or helicopters are fogged in, planters are required to travel by foot so be prepared.



Precautions

- Never travel alone.
- Make sure somebody always knows where you are going.
- Travel only as fast as the slowest member of your party.
- Travel with a two way radio and a map if possible.
- Never take short cuts. Even bush savvy veterans get turned around.

Crossing Slash Piles or Windrows

Crossing slash piles or windrows can be hazardous. Planters can fall into a slash pile cavity, be struck by an unbalanced log or fall onto a sharp stick. The likelihood of falling, and the potential consequences of a fall, increases when you're carrying heavy planting bags.

Controls

It is suggested that you stay off slash piles and windrows whenever possible. Don't cross them.

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Working in Burns

Breathing in soot and charcoal over a long period of time may contribute to the development of cancer or lung problems.

Controls

- If conditions are especially nasty, wear a dust mask or bandana over your mouth. This may prevent “hacking up a lung” at night.
- Avoid kicking up dust and ash as much as possible.
- If it’s windy, try planting on the down-wind side of your body.

Stock Handling Spruce Rash

When planting spruce, many people will develop small red, somewhat painful bumps on their arms, especially along the more tender skin on the inside of your arm.

Throughout the forest industry, there have been significant reductions in the use of pesticides on seedlings; however, there is still the potential that you will be planting treated seedlings.

Controls

Spruce Rash

This is due to a local irritation caused by the spruce needles. To prevent spruce rash, wear a long-sleeved shirt.

Pesticide Safety

It is your right and responsibility to know if pesticides have been applied to the seedlings you are planting. If in doubt, ask your supervisor. A 1988 study of treeplanter exposure to pesticides found that treeplanter exposure is well within acceptable levels, provided that necessary precautions are followed.

Always use proper lifting techniques when handling stock to prevent back injuries.

Precautions

- Wear a long-sleeved shirt.
- Wear impervious gloves.
- Clean hands with soap and water before eating (Eat with a baggie in hand) or smoking.
- Wash clothes regularly.

Seedling Boxes

Residual Pesticides

Seedling boxes may contain residual pesticides if the trees were treated. As a rule of thumb, don't use tree boxes for storing your clothing or lunch either on or off the block.

Flammable Wax Coating

On hot days, the wax on the seedling boxes can become sticky as it melts out of the cardboard. This wax is quite flammable and, once ignited, can flare up in a hurry. Be very careful when smoking near seedling boxes, especially on hot days.

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Why is treeplanting so strenuous?

Based on planting 1,600 trees per day, a treeplanter:

- Lifts a cumulative weight of over 1,000 kilograms.
- Bends more than 200 times per hour.
- Drives the shovel into the ground more than 200 times per hour.
- Travels about 16 kilometres on foot while carrying a heavy load of seedlings.

Warm-Up and Stretching

Give your muscles a quick warm up and then do a little stretching. You'll get your body ready to start planting injury-free. Stretch only after some light physical activity that can warm-up your muscles. Warm muscles stretch nicely, cold muscles tear.

Controls

Pre season training

- pre-season physical preparation
<http://selkirk.ca/treeplanting/pre-season-training-program>
- Planters fitness Cheat sheet

<http://wsca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Planter-Fitness-Cheat-Sheet.pdf>

https://fpi.adobeconnect.com/_a944324542/treeplanters/

Lifting

- When unloading transport trucks or setting up camp, remember to lift with your legs, not your back.
- Keeping the load close to your body prevents unnecessary strain on your back.
- When carrying a heavy load, avoid twisting your torso.

Gripping a Shovel

Regardless of what type of shovel you choose (D Handle, Ergo D Handle, Oval D Handle, Shock Absorbing Handle or Staff), ensure that your grip is loose.

Controls

The Claw

A condition caused in planter's shovel hands where finger(s) "snap" in a bent or straight position. This is often caused by holding the shovel handle too tightly. Experiencing "the claw" for the first time can be a little unnerving. Talk to the first aid attendant and they will help you loosen your hand. The official term is Dupuytren's Contracture.



Dupuytren's contracture

Handle Padding and Grip Diameter

Adding extra padding to the grip of a D-handle shovel (i.e. a dense neoprene) will increase the grip diameter of the handle and absorb some of the impact when planting. However, too much padding relative to hand size can promote injuries. If the grip diameter is too large for your hand, it requires more muscle strength to grip the shovel – particularly when pulling it out of the ground.



Grip the Side of the D-Handle

Holding the side of the D-Handle allows your hand to slightly slide down the side with each impact. This greatly reduces the potential of tendonitis. Try this technique in rocky or rooty ground.

Shock Absorbing Handle

If you are looking for a new product, try the new Shock Absorbing Handle. It takes the impact instead of your body.



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Screefing

Screefing all day is very hard work. Your best defense is to have your arms and back preconditioned to physical labour.

Controls

Boot Screefing

Screefing with your feet is appropriate for some types of ground. When boot screefing, use a heel-to-toe motion to avoid knee damage – the side-to-side motion is very hazardous

Desperate Planters Knee Maintenance

[http://selkirk.ca/sites/default/files/Faculty%20Research/140513c_knee_trifold_final%20\(1\).pdf](http://selkirk.ca/sites/default/files/Faculty%20Research/140513c_knee_trifold_final%20(1).pdf)

Shovel Screefing

Shovel screefing is required on projects where there is a lot of debris to be moved in order to prepare the planting spot. To adequately prepare the site, you may have to cut through moss, roots and sticks.

Shovel Screefing Precautions

- Space your feet at shoulder width or wider.
- Bend with the knees.
- Use shallow scoops and keep your wrists straight.
- Allow the blade edge to slice the ground rather than brute force to tear it apart.
- Know when to stop and visit the first aid attendant. Report pain before it becomes an injury. First aid attendants can help you recover.
- Wear gloves to protect your hands from abrasion.
- Duct tape or otherwise pad the top of your shovel blade (socket).



Putting the Shovel into the Ground

There are many factors that can reduce your effectiveness while planting; such as, how high you lift your shovel, arm motion, and/or use of your feet.

Controls

Pivot at the Elbow

If you lift your shovel unnecessarily high to slam it into the ground, you risk shoulder injury. Limiting arm motion (as much as possible) to the elbow will permit you to exert enough force to use your shovel effectively. You will be less prone to injury and other shoulder aches. Use your foot assist in hard or rocky ground.



to

Try to avoid raising your whole arm (pictured). This can lead to tendonitis and shoulder pain.

Use Your Feet

When the ground is hard or filled with rocks and/or roots, it can be very difficult to get your shovel into the ground to plant the tree. You stand a very good chance of injuring your shoulder, arms and hands if you slam your shovel into hard ground repeatedly.

- Tap your shovel on the ground looking for that “right spot”.
- Put your foot on the shovel and use your weight to drive the blade into the ground.
- Rather than using kicking power, use your weight - it's also easier on your feet.

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Putting the Tree into the Ground

Body positioning and how the tree is inserted into the ground can make a significant difference to the wear on your back and wrists. It will also affect your fatigue level and productivity.

Controls

Back Precautions

Desperate Planters Back up your back

http://selkirk.ca/sites/default/files/Faculty%20Research/150115b_BACK_trifold_FINAL.pdf

- Bend slightly at the knees when planting. This will greatly reduce unnecessary strain on the lower back and hamstrings.
- Avoid bending when twisted to one side.
- Use your shovel as a support when rising from a stooped position. Be sure to keep your arm close to your side or you may get a sore shoulder.

Removing the Shovel from the Ground

Some planters awkwardly twist their bodies every time they plant a tree.

This twisting is a result of the planter keeping his / her hand on the handle of the shovel while being completely bent over with their hand in the ground. To compound the problem, these planters will often tense their muscles in this position by pulling up on the shovel while still bent over (often your hands need to be on the roots to keep the tree in place). This is a very dangerous practice that can cause both acute and chronic back problems.

Can You See the Difference?



The elbow up in the air is a clear sign of an awkwardly twisted body.

Looking After Your Feet

If you want to have a good season, you must take care of your feet. Looking after your feet on a daily basis will prevent a great deal of discomfort.

Controls

Precautions

- Make sure your boots are comfortable before the start of the season.
- Bring/get a variety of shapes and sizes of Mole skin for applying to foot blisters.
- Always have dry footwear and socks for the end of the day.
- Wear sandals with dry socks in the evening if possible. Give your feet a dry out.



Insoles

Use an insole with good arch support. This aligns your ankle in its neutral position and creates a more linear path from the ground to your spine.

Foot Care Activities

- Dry your boots daily if possible.
- Wash and dry feet daily.
- Use foot powder to maximize drying.

Wrinkle Foot

- Your feet are likely to be wet for the better part of the day. If you don't have a boot leakage problem, you will have a heat problem. Try different footwear or less "hot" socks.
- Maximize drying in evenings. Use foot powder and open air. Try to stay off of your feet.



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Blistering

- If your boots are rubbing your feet badly in one or more places and your skin is red, swollen and wearing thin, you need to get some help for your feet before they really hurt. Let the first aid attendant help you with your problem and start contemplating alternative footwear. If you weren't already wearing Bama socks, start now.
- 2nd Skin Burn Gel or Blister Pads are excellent for even the worst blisters - a moist gel pad removes almost all friction, and can be taped in place with Elastoplast™ tape.

Looking After Your Hands

Planting will challenge your hands in many ways. Gripping the shovel, putting your hand in the ground, shovel screening and handling seedlings all take their toll. There are, however, a few precautions that you can take that will help keep your handles in reasonably good condition.

Controls

Unprotected fingers take a beating. Use sturdy dish gloves or duct tape to protect your planting hand. If you are having problems with your fingers or fingernails, get some assistance from the first aid attendant.



Finger Nails

Keep your fingernails short to help reduce the potential for dirt "wedgies". When packed in under your nails, dirt can pretty much pry your finger nail right off.

1. Gloves Should Cost:

[1\\$ / PAIR - GLOVES \(12's\) XS - Workwizer Tree Planting ...](#)

workwizer.ca/accessories.aspx

Gloves BELT WAIST PAD BUCKET SHOULDER HARNESS SHOULDER PADS MONEY ... Great for tree planting, as you still have good feel in your finger tips

2. Duct Tape Gloves

Many planters have discovered that they can make a very functional "glove" out of duct tape each morning. Duct tape, when properly applied, can protect your fingers nicely from in-ground hazards. Duct tape finger gloves also have the benefit of making your fingers a little more stiff which makes it easier to plant trees.



*****Duct tape does not protect your hands from pesticides.**

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Hydrating Your Body

All planters benefit from proper hydration. A well hydrated person is not only safer and healthier, but they also plant more trees with less effort.

Controls

Volume per Day

Drink lots of water each day. Experts recommend between **500 ml and 1.5 litres per hour** for high intensity work.

Frequency

Drinking frequently results in far greater absorption than binging. A few sips every five minutes is optimal. Drinking a litre at a time, 6-10 times a day has nowhere near the same effect.

Additional Resources

Refer to the *Working in Hot Weather Hazard Assessment and Training Briefing* for additional information on hydration.

Maintaining a Proper Diet

Power Eating for Power Planting is a program developed by Dr. Delia Roberts.

<http://selkirk.ca/sites/default/files/Faculty%20Research/selkirk-college-faculty-research-delia-roberts-fit-for-planting.pdf>

Preventing Illness

Controls

Never Drink from Streams, Lakes, Ponds or Puddles

Giardiasis (Beaver Fever)

Giardiasis Symptoms: Beaver Fever can put an end to your planting days. The main symptoms are diarrhea (mild to water hose), painful gas (which may include burping with a rotten egg smell), loss of appetite, headache, low-grade fever and overall fatigue. Some people may experience nausea and/or vomiting.

Note: The acute phase lasts 7 to 14 days, during which time planting is out of the question. If you get Beaver Fever, plan to be down for a while.

Treatment

- One can become dangerously dehydrated from diarrhea, so it is important to replace all lost fluids/electrolytes and seek medical attention promptly.
- To get better you will need prescription medication.

- If you are infected, the disease can spread from you to others in camp. It is extremely important that you wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after going to the bathroom.

Prevent Illness

- Wash your hands and face .
- Basins are on camp, fill with warm water use soap, dry with paper towels
- Wash before entering dining facilities.



Colds & Flu

The excessive fatigue, stress and lack of sleep associated with the beginning of the season, along with living in close association with many people, may predispose your body to illness. Getting sick not only affects how you feel, it also affects your productivity.

Prevention

- Get enough sleep. Most treeplanters require 9 hours of sleep each night.
- Eat a nutritious, balanced diet. Wash Produce
- When out on the block, eat your lunch by using a plastic baggie to hold your food
- Antibacterial gels can be used to clean your hands on the block.
- Wash your hands and face frequently
- Do not share beverages, food or cigarettes with other workers.

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Ergonomics

Some planters get repetitive strain injuries in their planting hands. This is often attributed to poor technique: excessive bending of the wrist while planting the tree – swinging/pivoting the roots into the ground.

Avoid any motion that involves the repeated bending of the wrist. Modify your technique to keep your wrist position relatively static. Planters who have learned to insert the tree into the ground straight down (no sweep) are much less likely to have wrist pain and injuries.

What happens if I get tendonitis?

Your summer plans can drastically change if you get tendonitis.

- If caught early, tendonitis can be a minor setback putting you out of commission for a couple of days. *Listen to your body If there is pain Stop! Report injury*
- Full-blown tendonitis could abruptly end your planting season and cause you a lot of pain.

Environmental conditions associated with tendonitis.

- Fast ground where a planter can put a large number of trees into the ground
- Rocky or rooty soil where it can be difficult to drive your shovel into the ground or if you regularly strike buried obstacles.
- Hard packed soil or soil with high clay content where driving your shovel into the ground can be difficult.
- Cold mornings , improper warm up especially in the spring when you are out of shape

Ergonomic Injuries

Tendonitis (continued)

Planting techniques and other risk factors associated with tendonitis.

How you plant each tree will affect your chance of suffering from tendonitis.

- Slamming your shovel into anything other than soft ground without using your foot is risky.
- Improper grip on the shovel handle may cause you unnecessary grief.
- Lack of physical preparation prior to the planting season may make it difficult for your body to adjust to the physical stress of planting.

Planter fitness cheat sheet

<http://wsca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Planter-Fitness-Cheat-Sheet.pdf>

Desperate planters Wrist Maintenance

<http://selkirk.ca/sites/default/files/Faculty%20Research/Selkirk%20College%20Research%20Wrist%20Pamphlet.pdf>

Switching planting hands can give your tired and injured arm a much needed break. Do not pump yourself full of painkillers and keep planting! Report potential injuries to a



First Aid Attendant promptly.

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Appendix 2 - Ergonomic Injuries

Ergonomic Injury Prevention Overview

The prevention of ergonomic injuries requires a multi-faceted approach:

- Targeted pre-season physical preparation
- Proper equipment set-up
 - Proper warm-up
- Proper technique
- Proper hydration
- Proper diet
- Adequate rest and other body maintenance
- Recognizing and reporting injuries

Resources

- **Proper equipment set-up**
 - " Tree planting shovel sizing and customization"
 - " Tree planting Bag sizing and customization"
- **Proper warm-up**
 - "Fundamental of planting quality"
- **Pre-season Physical Preparation**
 - <http://selkirk.ca/treeplanting/pre-season-training-program>
- **Planters Fitness Cheat Sheet**
 - <http://wsca.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Planter-Fitness-Cheat-Sheet.pdf>
- **Desperate Planters Knees**
 - [http://selkirk.ca/sites/default/files/Faculty%20Research/140513c_knee_trifold_final%20\(1\).pdf](http://selkirk.ca/sites/default/files/Faculty%20Research/140513c_knee_trifold_final%20(1).pdf)
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