



Softwood seedlings are available from several forest nurseries in the province.

Seedlings that are most commonly purchased are ready for planting before the trees are a year old. The root system of each seedling is enclosed in fine mesh which allows better root expansion.

Softwood trees are usually planted 1.8 m to 2.5 m (6 to 8 ft) apart. Hardwoods are often planted at least 3 m (10 ft) apart, to allow healthy crown development.

Once the trees are planted, competing vegetation such as grasses and woody shrubs should be controlled as much as possible. Woody vegetation can be reduced by using herbicide or with tools such as clearing (or spacing) saws. This treatment, called manual weeding, is effective for short periods and allows seedlings access to more sunlight and growing space.

If you are in doubt about whether to plant, or which tree species to plant, it is a good idea to contact a forest professional. He or she can provide you with information that will assist you in making good decisions in developing and managing a healthy family woodlot.

*For detailed information, please visit the following resources:*

**NS Department of Natural Resources**  
[www.gov.ns.ca/natr/woodlot](http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/woodlot)  
1-866-226-7577 [woodlot@gov.ns.ca](mailto:woodlot@gov.ns.ca)

#### **Forest Professionals**

- Registered Professional Foresters Association of Nova Scotia [www.rpfans.ca](http://www.rpfans.ca)
- Nova Scotia Forest Technicians Association [www.nsfia.ca](http://www.nsfia.ca)
- Canadian Institute of Forestry [www.cif-ifc.org](http://www.cif-ifc.org)

#### **Woodlot Owner Organizations**

- Federation of Nova Scotia Woodland Owners [www.fnswo.ca](http://www.fnswo.ca)
- Nova Scotia Landowners and Forest Fibre Producers Association [www.nslffpa.org](http://www.nslffpa.org)
- Nova Scotia Woodlot Owners and Operators Association [www.nswooa.ca](http://www.nswooa.ca)

#### **Harvesting and Silviculture Contractors**

- Nova Forest Alliance [www.novaforestalliance.com](http://www.novaforestalliance.com)
- Atlantic Master Loggers [www.cwfcof.org](http://www.cwfcof.org)

#### **Silviculture Assistance**

- Association for Sustainable Forestry [www.asforestry.com](http://www.asforestry.com)

#### **Woodlot Road Assistance**

- Forest Products Association of Nova Scotia [www.fpan.s.ca](http://www.fpan.s.ca)

*A Quick Guide to*

# **TREE PLANTING**



**FAMILY WOODLOT GUIDE**

Trees will grow almost anywhere in Nova Scotia, including old fields and on forest sites that have been harvested. As long as there are good seed sources – either from standing trees or from seeds that have been buried in the top layers of the soil – trees will flourish.

Seedlings that become established naturally do so in haphazard fashion. Some grow in clumps, others are scattered thinly across wide areas. In some places, trees seem to be reluctant to become established at all. Where there are inadequate trees on a forest site, or where the distribution of trees is less uniform than desired, planting is often used to supplement the natural seedlings in an area.

In Nova Scotia, most sites that require planting fall into one of two categories:

- old field sites that may not have supported trees for decades
- harvested forest sites that have not adequately regenerated.

Abandoned fields usually take 10 to 20 years to become natural forest, and planting can help speed this process. On harvested sites it is usually advisable to wait at least two years after the harvest to determine whether planting is required. If seedlings are already present, filling the gaps may be all that is needed.

On a harvested site, there may be seedlings and saplings present that may not be the same species as the harvested

trees, but which may be adequate for reforesting the site. In Nova Scotia, tree species that tend to grow in cutover sites include white birch, trembling aspen, red maple and balsam fir. These native species are often overlooked as crop trees.



If you are interested in producing good quality trees for traditional softwood timber, planting may be a necessity. Tree species that are commonly grown in tree nurseries for commercial production include red, black and white spruce. Planting larger areas may require site preparation with heavy equipment that mixes coarse woody debris with the upper layers of soil. This gives tree planters easier access to the site.

On old fields, single-furrow plows can help break up heavy sod and provide good planting sites on the raised mounds.

You may be interested in planting hardwood trees, to increase the biodiversity of your woodlot or to grow good quality hardwood trees for high value products. Some fast-growing trees such as willow and aspen can be planted to stabilize stream banks, provide buffers to wet areas, or produce woody biomass.

Hardwood seedlings and saplings are often heavily browsed by Nova Scotia wildlife such as whitetail deer and snowshoe hare. Planted hardwood trees usually require protection from browsing. Commercial guards such as tree tubes are available or you can make your own guards with wire mesh and stakes. Protecting hundreds of planted hardwood seedlings can be a time-consuming and expensive task but the results can be rewarding. Planting can be a great family activity. With special planting tools called dibbles or hoe pipes, planting is pleasant exercise.

