

NATIONAL TREE DAY



*“What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*’n160*

Every year, Australians celebrate National Tree Day in the last week of July – Schools Tree day is on the 29 July and National Tree day is on the 31 July. This day was established in 1996 and has grown into one of the largest community events, with [26 million](#) trees planted so far! It is a call to action to volunteer your time to simply plant a tree or engage in some other environmental activity.



A River Red gum tree against a blue sky.

Photo: G.Michener

The simple act of planting a tree (or any plant) benefits our common home in many ways. Plants absorb carbon dioxide gas which contributes to climate change, they store carbon and release oxygen for animals to breathe. Plants can also absorb harmful pollutants and improve water quality. Plant roots hold soil particles together and prevent rain and wind eroding precious soil away.

Our native animals rely on native plants for food and shelter. The removal of habitat is one of the biggest threats facing our native animals. Many of our vulnerable species are nearing extinction due to the removal of their habitats. In a low cost, relatively easy way, we can regenerate and restore habitat by planting indigenous grasses, shrubs and trees.

Other benefits include: spending time in nature is good for our health and well being, trees provide shade and cool the climate. They even reduce the noise in our busy cities! How marvelous is God’s gift of creation, given to us to be freely shared?

Did you know?



Spending 10 minutes in nature to plant a tree can reduce your blood pressure by slowing your heart beat. [Source](#)

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Suggested Activities and Resources

- Write 'Trees are the Earth's Lungs' on the whiteboard and ask for initial reactions from your students. Brainstorm the benefits of planting trees, then discuss.
- Use this [article](#) on the benefits of trees as a comprehension exercise.
- Adapt this '[Befriending a Tree](#)' spiritual exercise for your age group.
- Organise an excursion to your local park or botanic garden to learn about trees.
- Find out what the difference is between 'native' and 'indigenous'. Discuss why it is important to plant indigenous rather than native. Research an endangered animal in your local area.
- Create a play to perform at an assembly to show how trees provide food and shelter for animals and humans. A simple example could be a bee visiting a flower to collect pollen, taking it back to the hive to make honey and then having a person eating honey on their toast.
- Have a free dress 'Green day' – dress in green, dress up as a tree or leaf, dress up in an outfit that shows how and why trees are important. Organise a lunch time display to show how important trees are for oxygen, carbon storage, habitat, furniture and housing materials, they may hold a new medicine we don't know about yet!
- Hold a planting day in your school grounds where you plant indigenous trees to create habitat for a native animal that lives in your area.
- Find out what the national tree of Australia is, carry out some research on its' habitat and how to grow it. Grow one at home or at school.
- Research how humans use timber. How do our First Nations People use trees and timber?
- Get Arty using trees as your theme; e.g. make leaf impressions in clay, use gum nuts to make animals, leaf rubbings etc.

Resources

- [Planetark](#) has a wonderful toolkit with lesson plans, activities, certificates and more!
- [Lesson plans](#) for early learning – Year 10
- [Care for our Common Home](#) 4 min video on caring for each other and creation
- [Caring for Creation](#) – a series of 'See, Judge, Act' primary lessons on our common home

Get involved with a Planetark tree planting event: [Schools](#) [Parishes](#) [Families](#)

