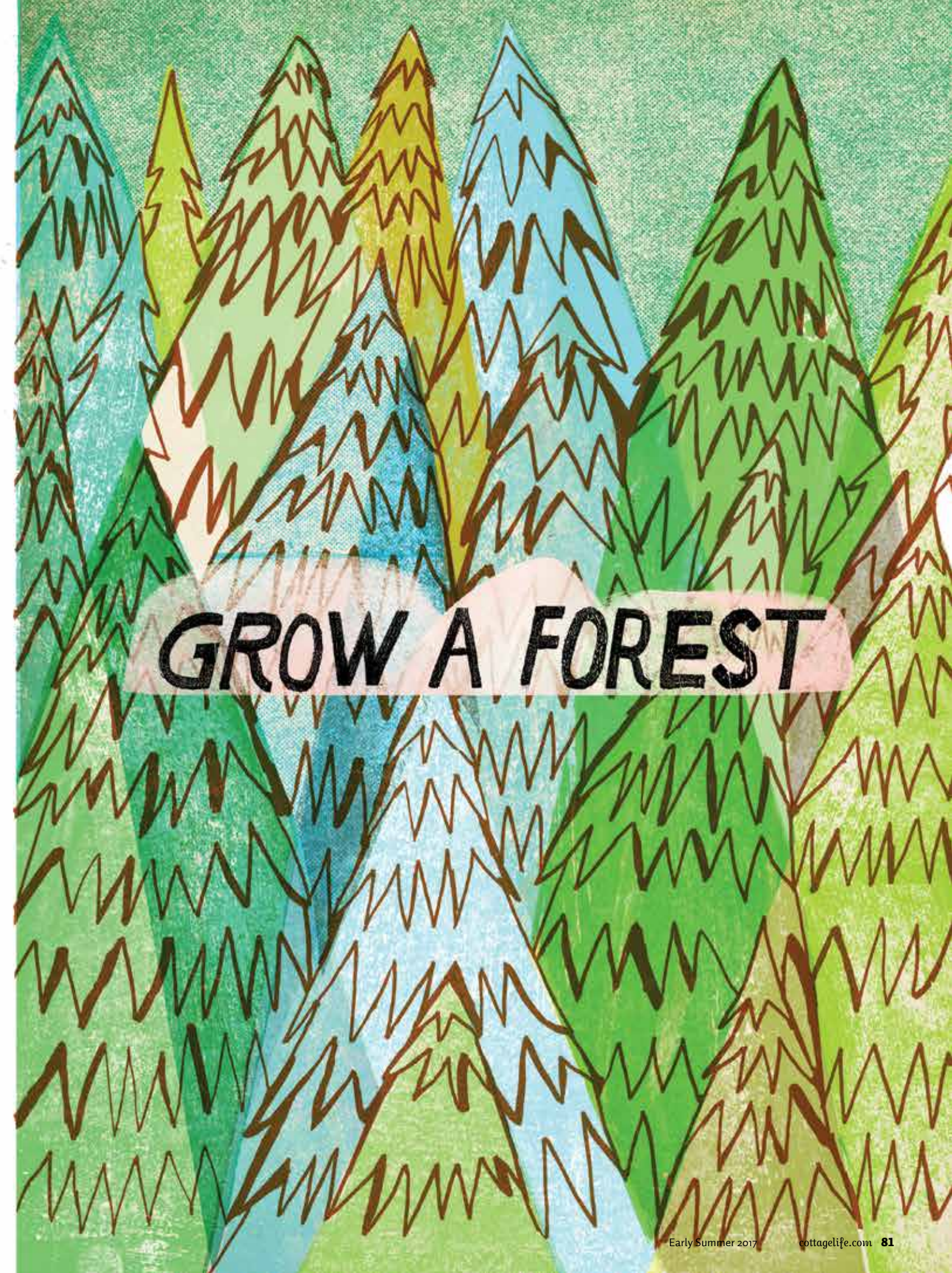


Get your shovel ready!
We challenge every
cottager in Canada to plant
a native tree to celebrate
our country's birthday.
It's one small action that
will last for generations

PLANT A TREE



Illustration Grady McFerrin



GROW A FOREST



THE LONG VIEW

When you put a tree in the ground,
you grow more than just a little greenery

By Liann Bobechko Photography Liam Mogan

Time is a funny thing. When I was a kid, anything that happened before I was born seemed to be from another century, in a category called The Past, which held not only world wars and former prime ministers, but also weird old hats from the '50s in the cottage closets and obsolete items in the shed, such as the two-man crosscut saw, the corrugated glass washboard, and the rusted-out tobacco tins.

Certainly, the 1967 Centennial, about which the grown-ups sometimes reminisced, seemed unreachable—perhaps because it took place more than 10 years (imagine!) before I was born or perhaps because it was an event that itself looked back even further into the past.

Maybe that's what gave the map such appeal. Growing up, we would occasionally pull out of a drawer in the dining room a hand-drawn map that showed our cottage and the clearing nearby. Like any good treasure map, it was a link to another place or time, in this case, that summer in '67 when Canadians were encouraged to take on a Centennial project. My grandparents wanted to do something and decided that their project would entail, over that summer, planting 100 trees at the cottage. They recorded each tree that went in the ground on the map—sometimes with the name of the family member or cottage guest who had planted it, sometimes just with an X—and noted the tree species. Many of those people, including my grandparents, are no longer living, but in each case they have a tree that lives on, recalling the day that it was placed in its new home.

Unlike on a pirate's map, however, where the prize is hidden, this treasure was one you could walk up to, sit under, chase your cousins around. Mostly white

spruce, but also balsam fir, a couple of white pines, and one or two tamarack, these saplings were added to the forest, reclaiming a little bit of the clearing that was once upon a time a working field. Using the existing forest as a guide, my family chose trees that were native not only to the area, but to the property.

As a kid, I remember finding a good walking stick, loading up on bug spray, and going on long "hikes" with my grandparents, brother, and cousins. We'd go by all the essential landmarks: the Lookout, where you could check on the status of the beaver dam; the wetland, where we'd watch herons and frogs; and the Mountain, which was really just a small piece of exposed Shield, but boasted fascinating lichen and pools of rainwater to explore. Along the way, my grandmother would use her pruning shears to cut back branches that were encroaching on the trail, and she or my grandfather would point out the song of a veery or show us that the bunchberries were in flower, which they had not been just the week before.

I'm sure my recollection of this is overly romantic. I'm sure the bugs were bad, our short legs were tired, and that we gaggle of rubber-boot-wearing, hooting kids frightened away all but the most curious wildlife. But what I recall from this, really, is how my grandparents loved the place and, especially, the forest, and how much they wanted to share that love with us.

I like to think that planting the trees for the Centennial was another expression of that love. That while they were celebrating the past they were also looking to the future and imagining their grandchildren {Continued on page 110}

HOW TO PLANT YOUR TREE

Choose one (wisely)

“Step outside, and take a look around at what’s growing,” says Katherine Witherspoon, a program manager with Tree Canada. “That’s an indication of what will do well.” You’ll want something native and non-invasive. (Native trees provide habitat and food sources for wildlife.) Got a few species in mind? Hit the books—well, hit the Internet—to investigate any potential disease or pest threats to your top choices. Your goal is to plant a tree that will have the greatest chance of succeeding in today’s climate change-y world. “I would not recommend, for example, planting an ash somewhere where the emerald ash borer is a huge threat,” says Witherspoon.

Location, location, location

Right tree, right place, say the experts. You’ve picked the right tree. The right place is at least two metres from buildings, driveways, septic systems, and overhead structures. Avoid planting in an area with poor drainage or anywhere that might interfere with a future reno; expect a tree’s root system to reach at least as far as its canopy. “And don’t plant a tree where it will block your view when it’s fully grown,” says Robin Hastings, an arborist with Bartlett Tree Experts in Delta, B.C. You’re not getting a hamster. You’re not even digging an outhouse pit. Trees last a long time.

Put that baby in the ground!

Size-wise, you can plant anything from a tiny seedling to a fully grown tree. Don’t plant during weather extremes—the hottest part of summer or right before the cold hits. For a small sapling—what you’ll typically get from a nursery—dig a hole “no deeper than the tree’s pot, but about two or three times as wide,” says Hastings. Plant deep enough so the roots are covered and the tree is snug in the soil (no air pockets).



5] Heartwood

The central support pillar, or core, of the tree. It’s the oldest part of a tree but completely dead. The wood is usually darker than the rest of the tree’s wood because it’s filled with tannins and other substances.

4] Xylem

(or sapwood) Another distribution layer, made up of tiny tubes (think a bunch of small straws or coffee stirrers) that carry minerals and water from the roots to the crown of the tree. When the xylem (“zi-lem”) dies, it becomes the tree’s heartwood.

3] Cambium

A thin layer. It produces new tissue that becomes either phloem (on one side) or xylem (on the other side) every year. The cambium is responsible for generating a tree’s annual growth rings.

1] Outer bark

This protects the tree from disease and damage and insulates it from cold and heat. It’s like a tough animal hide or a really great motorcycle suit. The outer bark is made from old, dead inner bark cells that have been shed outwards.

2] Phloem

(or inner bark) A layer of tubes that acts as a distribution system, sending food—from the leaves—to the rest of the tree. It’s like a series of sturdy milkshake straws. All vascular plants have phloem (“flo-em”). It transports the products of photosynthesis.

Sapling

(under five) Saplings need about 20 mm of water per week. Depending on the amount of rain you get at the cottage, Ma Nature may have this covered, but check the soil every few days (or at least every weekend). It should always be damp but never have pooled water.

Threats Getting trampled or eaten. By anyone or anything. Protect your sapling with a cage of chicken wire; mark its location with a flag.

THE STAGES OF (TREE) LIFE

Young tree

(by age five) After the first three years of life, trees don’t usually need supplemental watering. But they may need “formative” pruning to fix small problems before they morph into big ones (example: crossing and rubbing branches that can damage portions of bark). Mulching every year or two with wood chips helps to keep the tree’s roots moist. Spread an even layer, two to four inches thick; don’t mound it volcano-style. **Threats** Wildlife browsing and human-inflicted injuries (example: a lawn mower knick).

Mature tree

(by 15 to 30) Mature trees shouldn’t need much pruning, but it’ll be necessary if any branches are growing too close to your cottage windows or—yikes—power lines. Or if they’re a hazard: broken or about to break. **Threats** Any kind of stress, including stress from pests and disease. Older trees are tough, yes. But they’re also, well, *old*. —Jackie Davis



MEET THE 12* TREES OF CANADA



Western red cedar, B.C.

This tree grows all along the West Coast, is vital to Aboriginal life and culture, and is considered one of the most valuable species in B.C. “Tree of life”? Absolutely.



Lodgepole pine, Alberta

The most abundant tree in the Rockies, it was used to make railway ties for tracks connecting the province to the rest of Canada. Aboriginal peoples use this pine for lodges.



White birch, Saskatchewan

It grows across most of the province. Its bark—pliable, chalky white, and paper-like—was used in canoe-making, hence the alternative names “paper birch” and “canoe birch.”



White spruce, Manitoba

The species can survive in almost any climatic and environmental area of the province. Roots were once used in canoe-making; now its wood is used commercially for paddles.



Eastern white pine, Ontario

Eastern white pine is the tallest tree in the province and, in colonial times, was used to make masts for the British Royal Navy ships. It was also good for coffins. (Morbid!)



Yellow birch, Quebec

Abundant in the southern region, it plays a key role in the furniture industry. Yellow birch can be tapped for syrup, and its wood is used for everything from doors to toothpicks.



Balsam fir, New Brunswick

Short-lived, the species is vital to the pulp and paper industry, grows in a wide variety of conditions, and makes up 97 per cent of the province’s Christmas tree trade.



Red spruce, Nova Scotia

Red spruce was used in shipbuilding; pioneers steeped the twigs in water to cure scurvy. The tree represents “strength and versatility,” says the official proclamation.



Red oak, P.E.I.

The species was nearly milled out of existence on the island because the wood was so popular with furniture makers. Now, red oaks are found mostly in patches across the province.



Black spruce, Newfoundland & Labrador

Black spruce is the most common tree in the province, appears on the Labrador flag, and is a top tree in the pulp and paper industry.



Subalpine fir, Yukon

It’s a hardy one, with short, stiff branches that stand up to snow loads. First Nations use its needles to make tea as a cold remedy and have treated lung problems with its sap.



Tamarack, N.W.T.

Heavy and decay-resistant, tamarack wood is turned into everything from posts and poles to dogsled runners and boat ribs. Unlike most conifers, tamarack loses its needles in the fall.



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ON SALE JULY 10

Cottage Life

THE LONG VIEW

{Continued from page 83}

walking the same forest with *their* children, pointing out the bunchberries and caring for the trees.

I don't need to tell cottagers the value of trees. Most of us have a tree that forms a key piece of our cottage experience, be it part of our favourite view, a landmark on the drive, or one that we've spent hours under, summer after summer, watching life unfold in its branches. More than simply being beautiful—and simply beautiful they are—trees are understatedly useful: these long-term friends provide a weapon in the increasingly critical battle against climate change by storing carbon dioxide; they give shade for fish and the cool understorey; they make habitat for wildlife, clean the air and the water, and stabilize the soil—all the while giving you a place to hang your hammock.

New research in tree science has revolutionized our understanding of trees, and of forests. For instance, where it once seemed that trees were competing with each other for resources and light, findings such as those from forest scientists at UBC have shown that, thanks to a vast and dense web of mycorrhizal connections, trees are also sharing nutrients—and not only between related members of the same species. Just as cottagers will loan a ladder or an egg to a neighbour in need, fir will share with birch, and birch with fir. Carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus, and water will flow in either direction through the spidery underground network that connects the trees, depending on which one has some to spare. Sure, they reach for the sun and try to sprint past their neighbours when the canopy opens up, but when bark beetles, say, or clear-cutting takes out too much of the forest, the trees that remain are vulnerable. Through centuries of toughing out fires, tornadoes, droughts, and pests, they have figured out that they are stronger together than apart.

There's a saying that while the best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago, the second best time is today. Maybe your grandparents didn't plant a tree at your cottage. Maybe they never stood on Canadian soil. But this year, for the country's anniversary, Cottage Life is inviting

every cottager to plant a native tree. We want to help create a legacy for future generations that shows them we care. That we care for the environment, for family, and for all Canadians, whether their ancestors were the first people on this land, or they themselves are the first generation here.

When in the company of trees I'm often reminded of the Ents, the powerful tree-like beings in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. They're a usually gentle, but sometimes crotchety bunch, who, because of their long lives, have a different sense of time. They make decisions slowly, with much reasoning and deliberation, and seem mystified by the rash action and scurrying around of the less-rooted peoples around them. Canada's non-fictional trees can live a very long time—some species for up to 2,000 years. There's a subalpine larch in Kananaskis, Alta., that's thought to be 1,943 years old and a Nootka cypress on Vancouver Island that's 1,636. Ontario's oldest living tree is an eastern white cedar on the Niagara Escarpment. It germinated in 688, making it almost 1,330 years old. And while the trees growing beside your cabin are probably not as old as those, it's not unthinkable that they could live for 100, even 200 years. These slow-growing giants must surely take the long view. It's a perspective we can borrow to slow down and to plan thoughtfully and with foresight to redefine the meaning of cottage-time.

My uncle tells me that for the first year or two he would water the young trees once in a while, keeping an eye on them during those critical years. In the summers that followed, he went back and planted replacements for the two trees that didn't survive. A forest is not just a destination to soothe your soul or where you can learn about the place you stand, it is a living process and a physical embodiment of hope for the future. All living things will grow and eventually die. In the meantime, we can try to leave something meaningful behind. 🐛

Senior editor Liann Bobechko earned more bug bites than dollars as a tree planter.

Find native tree sources for your cottage at Ontario's greenleafchallenge.ca. Share your story on social media: #growitforward.