



On Planting Trees in Schools...

Planting trees in schools...the creation of a new woodland or making a garden...is the beginning of creating a balanced system of wholeness and health.

In general, planting trees and creating 'natural' landscapes provides the most important and enriching environment for children. No man-made playscape/playground can compare. Not only that...the cost is but a fraction of the built playground.

And!...just as the man-made play equipment, timber structures, playhouses are beginning to reach the end of their life (estimate 10-20 years), your trees are just beginning to take off...providing shade and winter shelter; beauty; useful things like food, timber, artwork materials; great places to explore, play, teach, sit quietly, tell stories and be together.

When children plant trees and get the chance to establish a new landscape, they find they are also providing homes and shelter to hundreds of animals and insects; and that they are becoming part of an essential lifelong association with the natural world.

Trees cannot move! Yet their strength and brightness reaches out for miles, and down through generations.

I have been helping schools to plant trees for 10 years: first, with Bishops Wood Centre (1997-2002), and for the last five years with my own company, Green. The success of such a scheme depends on good design, sourcing good quality plants, providing plants with the most beneficial start when they go into the ground, and gentle cajoling of the gardeners!

It is a common mistake in school grounds design to just plant native deciduous trees. The onset of climate change demands that species variation is vital, and it is important that a good number of evergreen trees are planted which will give interest and much needed shelter during the winter (the majority of the school year), and provide nesting sites for birds within 5 years.

Self sufficient production of raw materials such as timber, fruit, nuts, etc. will be essential within 20 years time – now is the time to put those trees and plants into the earth!

Overall, the planting that I recommend requires trees that are more expensive than those usually planted in schools...of course, the trees recommended are much more interesting, productive and beautiful than you would normally see in a typical school.

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