



COMMUNITY ACTIVITY SITE [30 MINUTES]


# Take Root Tree Planting



 **Eco-Question:** What do seeds need to grow?

 **Spiritual Question:** What are my spiritual roots?

 **What will kids do?** Kids plant or adopt a tree on church grounds. (Outdoor/indoor options provided.)

 **Why is this activity important?** Trees sustain us by nourishing the soil, giving oxygen to breathe, and providing food, fuel, shade, and erosion control. In gratitude we are called to care for all of God's sustaining creation. God's love takes root in us as we care for God's world.

DAY 2

## Get Ready

- tree for planting (pre-arranged outdoor site or potted tree or plant to share)
- shovels, spades
- watering can, hose (no leaks!)
- compost (or other nutrients needed)
- paper, pencils, crayons (optional)
- community expert (optional)

## Get Set (Up)

Whether you're planting a tree outside, in a pot, or simply talking about trees, this is a great day to ask an expert to join you—a congregation member with a green thumb, businessperson from a local nursery, forester from a local DNR, or master gardener. Gather supplies needed for your plan and become familiar with tree types and specific planting tips. Ask for tips at the nursery or other place where you receive the tree, or learn more about planting by entering "How to plant a tree" in a favorite web search engine. Have a plan in place for continued care of the tree. Review leader tips for alternative suggestions.

## Go Green!

Welcome kids to the Community Activity Site. Tell them they will help plant a tree (or pot a plant or welcome a guest). It's important to make sure the roots are planted just right. Have kids touch their thumbs together, pointing all fingers down as if they are roots pointing toward the soil. **What do you know about roots? About trees? Can you get to ten?** Kids dig one root (finger) deeper each time someone shares a new fact.

As you move to your planting area, continue the discussion about roots and trees. Share how roots bring water and food to a tree and keep trees supported and upright. Roots are the tree's anchor.

Ask kids to tell you good things we get from trees: healthy soil, oxygen for breathing, shade to keep us cool, and wood to build and burn. And that's before we talk about food—apples, pears, peaches, and nuts! **When God made trees—just like all of creation—God made a lot! One way we can help God is by finding ways to take care of creation. God's love takes root in us and we can care for creation.** Encourage kids to repeat, **"God's love takes root in me!"** as they plant and enrich their community.

1. Check out the tree you will plant. Look at its roots and ask kids to name other parts.
2. Follow planting instructions, involving everyone as you can.
3. Make sure the root system is in place, taking care to cover all roots.
4. When the tree is planted, ask kids to bend down to touch the dirt at the base of the tree and repeat: **Thanks, God, for strong roots that make strong trees. Amen.**

## Move to Act!

Have kids again hold fingers down, like roots to the ground. **God's love takes root in you and in me. We helped a tree take root today and cared for God's creation. Because the tree is rooted,** (move fingers to the sky as if roots are now leaves stretching) **the tree has a chance to grow.** Form a circle around the tree. Ask kids to name one thing they can do to help take care of a person, plant, or animal. When all are finished cheer together, **"God's love takes root in me."**

### greenER:

Trees that are native to your area take less water and usually are more pest tolerant. Check with a local expert for recommendations.

### greenEST:

Summer plantings can work, but need extra care and a solid watering plan. Consider eco-friendly options for watering, such as a rain barrel.

## Leader Tip

In a church where outdoor planting is not a possibility, find a tree you'll call your tree-for-a-day. Observe it, name it, care for it, do bark rubbings, measure the diameter, tell its story, or water it if needed. Or, plant a tree or other plant in a pot to give to the church. Kids can care for it throughout the year. (Just make sure you have a plan!)