

## Chapter 04 – “Camping Gear & Clothing”

I'm going to try to make this simple, and put a summary list right up front. This list will include items that I think a planter should consider bringing with them for a season of planting. I'll go into more detail about some of the listed items as we get further through the chapter (other things, such as planting equipment, will be covered elsewhere). What is important to remember is that the list here is things to consider. Many of the items are recommended, but are not mandatory. Whether you bring them will depend on personal preference and how much storage/carrying capacity you have.

Although the planting industry used to be very heavily male-dominated, that has improved significantly over the past decade. I have a section at the end of this chapter which mentions a few things that women should consider when coming to the bush. I hope that none of the women reading this book overlook that section.

A soon-to-be planter once sent me this question:

*“I was wondering what your take was on this. I have never planted before and the company I am working for said I am mainly going to be working out of bush camps. I have worked at fire camps and I know what gear to bring and not to bring. My problem is we were either driven right out to our sites or flown there and I don't know how it works with tree planting. If I have to haul my camping gear in for a long distance it is pretty damn heavy. Should I be really concerned about weight?”*

The answer to the above question is, “Yes and no.” Planting (out of a camp) will be like working in fire camps. You will probably never have to pack your gear for long distances. You will almost always be able to drive right into camp, and when that is not possible there will be rolligons or haglunds or helicopters taking you right into camp. So technically, no, you don't have to worry about weight.



**Figure 4.01**  
Hockey Bag.

*A hockey bag is a good way to carry gear around.*

However, having said that, you'll obviously want to use some common sense. Cutting back on what you bring with you is critical. Don't leave things at home that you'll need, but at the same time, remember that whatever you bring with you needs to be carried around all summer, and this includes times in town when you're between contracts. My basic rule is that if you can't fit everything that you own into two large hockey bags, you probably have too much stuff (this doesn't include your planting equipment, that can be considered separately). It's amazing how quickly the crew trucks fill up with planters' personal gear when moving camp. The less you have, the more efficient and mobile you'll be when you're moving or travelling. By the way, hockey bags ARE a great way of carrying gear around, and they're sturdy. Duffle bags are too. And some people use backpacks. I'd say that the most common combinations of carrying devices that I see on planters flying in for a new season would be either a hockey bag and a large backpack, or a duffle bag and a large backpack.



**Figure 4.02**  
Duffle Bag.

*Old duffle bags are also quite popular. I think a lot of people get these from their parents, or from army surplus stores.*

Your decisions about how much gear to bring may be influenced by whether you're flying or driving to your job. Bringing a personal vehicle to a planting job (discussed elsewhere) can be expensive, but it also allows you more freedom, and more space to bring and store your stuff. If you're flying, you'll probably want to restrict yourself to everything that you can fit into roughly two hockey bags or duffle bags.

Airlines usually charge for every checked bag now (no "first bag free"), unless you have a ticket which is better than basic economy class. This makes flying with a lot of gear more expensive. The cost of additional bags tends to be higher than the cost for your first checked bag, probably over \$100

per bag. There are also weight restrictions on your luggage (check your airline website for the correct weight limits per bag, probably around 50 pounds). There may also be an absolute limit on how many bags you can fly with. In some cases, you may find it to be cheaper or more convenient to ship some of your gear or belongings directly to your company, to ensure that your belongings are waiting for you when you arrive for the start of the season. Greyhound Shipping doesn't exist in western Canada anymore. Canada Post can be expensive, but at other times it's surprisingly affordable, and a realistic alternative to flying with everything. If you measure the length, width, height, and weight of a parcel that you're thinking about shipping, you can go to the Canada Post website and enter these four measurements, along with the source and destination addresses, and their website will tell you the exact cost to ship your parcel. I've shipped large parcels back and forth across Canada dozens of times, with only a few problems.

By the way, after you read through my equipment list, you can go onto Reddit and do a search in the /r/treeplanting sub on the term "gear." Don't go onto that sub and put up a post asking for what other planters recommend to bring to a bush camp. That's annoying, because dozens of people have done that already. Search is your friend. There are great conversations and multiple lists of recommended gear online, in case you're worried that I haven't been thorough.

## Equipment List

Items on this list are generally indispensable, or at the very least, highly recommended. Full descriptions of what to look for are provided further after this point-form summary.

### **Clothing:**

- Work boots.
- A caulk-wrench and spare caulks, if you wear caulked boots (optional).
- Rain gear.
- Work pants, and a belt. You'll lose a lot of weight and your pants will start to fall off.
- Long underwear/sweat pants.
- T-shirts, and long-sleeve work shirts.
- Long-sleeve fleece.
- Socks and underwear.
- Hat.
- Gloves (certain types are best for planting).
- Town clothes and boots (hiking shoes).
- Swim suit.

### **Toiletries/Personal/Medicinal:**

- The basics – toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, shaving kit, shampoo, soap, tampons/pads, etc.
- Hand cream/moisturizer. Creams with vitamin E are great.

- Sun screen lotion.
- Fingernail clippers.
- Vaseline, lip balm, and either Lanacane or Zincofax or Penaten for chafing and rashes.
- Polysporin is very helpful to keep cuts on your hands and fingers from becoming painfully infected.
- Solarcaine, in case you get a bad sunburn (optional).
- Heat rub for sore muscles (optional).
- Tylenol/Aspirin/Advil or other painkillers, muscle relaxants such as Roboxacet, or anti-inflammatories such as Aleve (all optional).
- Antihistamines, if you might have allergies/hay fever (optional). Make sure you get non-drowsy brands for daytime use.
- Towel.

### **Camping and Other Miscellaneous gear:**

- Tent.
- Sleeping bag.
- Large “foamie” which acts as a cushion under your sleeping bag.
- Small pack or bag for lunch and rain gear, known as your “day bag.”
- Water jug (don’t fly with this, get it when you arrive).
- Insect repellent containing DEET.
- Wind-up alarm clock (something that doesn’t rely on batteries is handy).
- Flashlight, with lots of batteries. Or even better, get a wind-up flashlight that doesn't require batteries.
- Camera (optional).
- A mobile phone, IF you can keep it charged, eliminates the need for a flashlight and alarm clock and camera. But a flashlight is useful, as is a LED light on a headband. And the headband is better when you’re in the outhouse without pockets.
- Battery powered Coleman lantern, and lots of batteries (optional).
- Duct tape (optional).
- Plate, bowl, knife, fork, spoon, travel mug, Tupperware container for lunch.
- A package of large zip-lock bags is invaluable for keeping valuables dry. This includes a roll of toilet paper that you’ll want to carry in your back bag while planting.

### **Planting Gear:** *(covered in a different chapter)*

- Set of planting bags.
- Shovel.
- Silvicool inserts for planting bags (you’ll probably need three).
- Plot cord – 3.99 meter.
- Safety whistle.
- A cheap watch.

## Clothing

### Boots

Your boots should have steel shanks (a metal strip in the sole) to give protection against bruising of the bottom of your foot. Many planters wear caulked boots (pronounced corks) in order to achieve a better grip on slippery logs and to enhance screefing capabilities – the process of disturbing the ground surface to prepare a spot for your seedling.

Boots can generally be divided into two types: rubber and leather (or waterproof and not waterproof). To increase your comfort, you can use insoles (wash them regularly), wear two or more pairs of socks, and buy boots big enough so that two pairs of socks and insoles fit well. Boots should not be too tight or loose.

Leather work boots, once broken in, are generally quite comfortable. They will last a long time if you clean them regularly and put shoe-wax on them. Clean them every day off (wipe off mud, etc.). If you buy leather boots, you *really* should break them in before you go planting by wearing them around for a few weeks. If you don't, you might be sorry (blisters, and maybe a few non-productive days). Leather boots will not keep your feet dry in the rain (although you can wear a baggie or bread bag between layers of socks on each foot). If you can get them cheap, army surplus cadet boots (with steel toe and sole) also work well. Otherwise, buy CSA approved steel toe and steel shank work boots.



**Figure 4.03**  
Work Boots.

*Leather work boots are available from a variety of locations. You may find that some of the cheaper brands have soles that will chip away if you're using the kicker on your shovel quite frequently. These boots can be made waterproof, but may not come that way when new.*

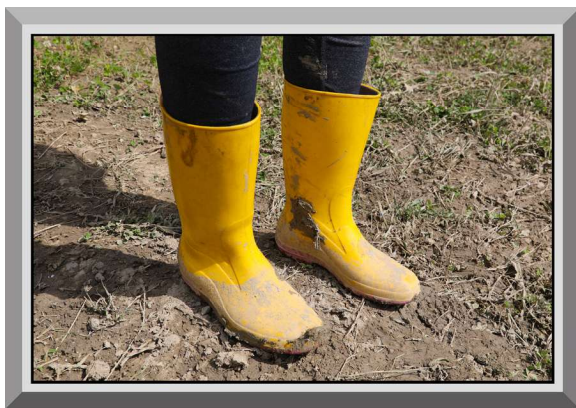
Leather hiking boots are one of the most comfortable types of footwear known to man. Once broken in, they feel great on your feet. However, you may be doing some screefing with your feet, which will ruin many types of hiking boots very quickly. More modern forms of hiking boot, such as GoreTex or day hikers, are useless. GoreTex loses its water resistance when it gets dirty. Fancy designs with multiple panels of leather or plastic components may wear out very quickly. I would usually advise against buying hiking boots for planting because they wear out too quickly (unless you want a pair for just lounging around camp and town). Also, I'm definitely not a fan of hiking boots that don't have ankle support. Hiking boots are great for town though, so long as you don't make the mistake of wearing them on the block for a shift and ruining them.



**Figure 4.04**  
Hiking Boots.

*This particular brand of hiker is great for the drive to and from the blocks, for use in town, and for use around camp (so long as the camp isn't too muddy). Hikers are also light and comfortable if you're working on dry, fast, easy ground.*

Rubber boots are great because they keep your feet dry, which is critical. There are several kinds of rubber boots available. Chainsaw boots are orange, with chainsaw matting (Kevlar) over the shin. These have steel toe and shank, and are heavy. Some people recommend that you avoid this type of boot, but I've worn them for many seasons and haven't minded them. They're especially great in Alberta mud.



**Figure 4.05**  
Rubber Boots.

*Rubber boots are also known as rain boots. They're usually fairly cheap, and they're usually quite good at keeping your feet dry. Actually, they're somewhat underrated. Of course, if you get onto fast, dry ground, you'll probably want to have a different type of boot option.*

Lace-ups are a boot of choice for many BC planters. They're comfortable, easy to put on/take off, and available with or without caulks. The best kind seems to be the blue Viking brand (which are now black, not blue). These boots are very popular, and they're priced quite reasonably, but you get what you pay for - these boots may not last a full spring and summer season. I've heard lots of complaints from planters who have torn these boots part-way through their first season, so I'd be reluctant to endorse them or buy them. Black Vikings come in both caulked and non-caulked options. If you do buy lace-ups, don't forget to buy a couple pairs of extra laces. Rubber boots without laces, but with steel toe and shank, can also work well. They also last quite a while, and don't cost too much. However, the fact that they don't lace means you float around inside them, which is uncomfortable to some people.



**Figure 4.06**  
Blue Viking Lace-Up Boots (Now Black).

*The “Blue Viking” boots have been a favorite among many planters, although they did rip fairly easily in moderate slash. In 2021, the blue version was changed to black. As of February 2026, IRL was selling these for \$220.95/pair caulked or \$173.95/pair standard sole.*

Speaking of caulks, we already briefly mentioned the value of caulks on tough, steep ground with a lot of slash. Viking Black Tusks (now discontinued) are moderately heavy, but some coastal planters (including myself) wore them as a mid-range boot. After they’ve been used for four or five days and they’re worn in, they become a lot more comfortable. Make sure you carry a pair of hiking boots or runners for town use, because you’ll get yelled at if you wear caulked boots in gas stations, convenience stores, etc. Incidentally, caulks are pronounced as “corks” if you’re referring to boots (this is a different pronunciation than the caulk product which is used as construction sealant). Technically, the term “caulk” refers to the little metal spike parts on the bottom of the boot.



**Figure 4.07**  
Caulked Boots (Viking Black Tusks).

*Some coastal planters and many loggers used to wear Black Tusks, which were another brand from Viking. Some planters found these to be very heavy and/or uncomfortable. I liked them for planting though, and loved them for chain saw work. Not available since 2023, unfortunately.*

Plastic boots are also available, aka. “double boots.” These are almost like cut-off ski boots, and are light, warm, and decently waterproof, especially if worn with gaiters. The hefty price (\$400-\$500 or even much more) scares away many people. I wouldn’t recommend double boots for first-year planters, although some high-production experienced planters use them, depending on personal preference. A lot of professional planters go with regular mountain boots such as Scarpas or La Sportiva, which are basically high-end and very good quality hikers. You can also have a pair of these boots resoled to take caulks (an additional expense of probably \$150-180), which makes them a great boot, but again, really only for the high production pros.



**Figure 4.08**

Scarpas.

*These boots are quite expensive. You won't see many first-year planters wearing these. These boots are more common among multi-year vets who work on challenging, technical ground.*

Boots are one item where planters have a lot of opinions. Here's one email that I got from a very good planter who did a lot of work in northern BC and Alberta:

*"A bunch of us on the crew last year bought some of the green Dunlop Rig boots (Thermic). They are relatively cheap, very light, steel toed and extremely durable. I destroyed about 3 pairs of expensive work boots each year (prior to last year) and these things have now lasted me a season and a half. Another guy here has had a pair that has lasted two seasons. They are painful for about two weeks until they are broken in. I have ankle issues and these things are an amazing help with that too. They are about \$190 per pair before tax."*

Like chainsaw caulks, the green Dunlops are fairly heavy, but very durable.

I hesitate to recommend any specific type of boot, simply because there are so many options, and because planters have so many different opinions about which boots are best. Also, the utility of any specific brand or style also depends on the type of ground that you're working on. Bottom line: Your boots are your most important overall investment in terms of work clothing. The old adage, "You get what you pay for," is often correct. If a specific pair of boots seems like a great deal, there may be a reason for the low price. The Replant.ca message board has an entire sub-forum with dozens of separate discussions devoted specifically to planting footwear, at: [www.replant.ca/boots](http://www.replant.ca/boots)



**Figure 4.09**

Caulk Wrench.

*You're able to change the caulks (spikes) on your caulks (boots) if you have a caulk wrench. Replacement caulks (spikes) are about sixty cents apiece. Remember that they're pronounced "corks"*

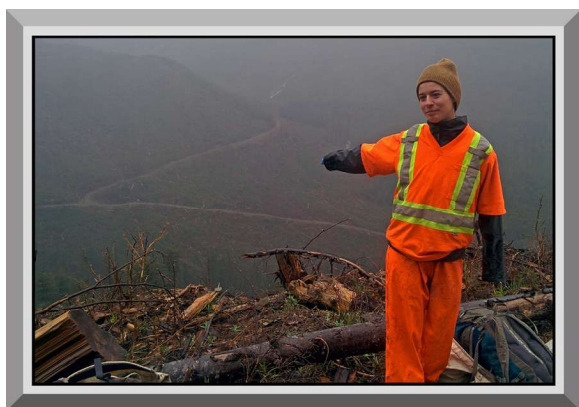
Rain gear is very important since planters work in both good and bad weather. A rain jacket and rain pants are both necessary. A wool sweater underneath (and possibly a wool scarf in cold rains) will also significantly increase your comfort. Investing a little extra in rain gear will pay off in the long run - it can be frustrating to miss a day of work because of sickness or cold that was exaggerated due to inadequate rain gear.



**Figure 4.10**  
Good Rain Gear.

*There is no one standard for rain gear, which comes in many brands and colours. Look for something that isn't too heavy, but which won't rip easily. It's a trade-off. The advantage of rain gear isn't that it keeps you dry, but it keeps you warmer.*

Bear in mind that when you're planting, you can't afford to hide in a warm truck any time that it starts to rain, no matter how appealing that seems. You need to continue working, while trying to keep dry and warm. You probably can't stay that dry, but you still need to stay warm. Planting is one way to keep warm – if there is a cold rain, you will soon learn that taking a break even for a couple minutes while bagging up really makes you cold, although you'll warm up again once you start working hard. Cotton clothes are especially cold when they get wet, so you should never wear cotton in the rain. You can complement your rain gear with a Merino Wool under-layer and a wool sweater.



**Figure 4.11**  
More Rain Gear.

*On cold rain days, you'll probably want to wear several layers including a wool sweater. Keep this in mind when you're buying a rain jacket, and don't get one that is going to be too small when you're wearing a sweater.*

Merino Wool under-layers are amazing. Look for these at places like Mark's Work Wearhouse. If you don't have Merino wool, another decent option is a shirt made of non-cotton materials such as polypro.

Stanfield's Underwear sells a wool sweater called the "Henley" brand. It's a gray, long-sleeved wool sweater that I swear by. Most of the pro planters have one. You can find them at Mark's Work

Warehouse. A Henley worn over a Merino wool under-layer is going to be as good as it gets for cold and wet weather. This style of sweater is ubiquitous on the coast, and has also become a staple in many Interior camps for the cold days of early May. Because so many people own them, it's smart to put some sort of permanent tag somewhere on the inside, so you can identify which one belongs to you if you take it off and set it down somewhere. Until 2023, they came in one colour: Grey. However, Stanfield's now produces the Heritage heavy-weight wool Henley in at least nine distinct colours, which helps to keep them identifiable when everyone around you is wearing them.



**Figure 4.12**

A Tree Planter Wearing a Henley Wool Sweater.

*I love these sweaters. They're ideal for working on the coast, or in any type of cold and wet weather.*

To really keep yourself warm when working in freezing rain, make sure you have a wool scarf. Remember that you lose a disproportionate amount of heat from the back of your neck. If you can keep your neck warmer when there's cold rainwater running down it, your entire body will feel several degrees warmer. Wool scarves aren't common for some reason, but trust me, they work well to keep you warmer. Maybe some planters are embarrassed to wear scarves. I'm not. This isn't a fashion show.



**Figure 4.13**

Wool Scarves are Wonderful.

*I think I'm the only tree planter in western Canada who wears a scarf in cold/wet weather, but I like to think that this is because I'm about to start a trend. Seriously, a good wool scarf makes a huge difference. Underrated.*

*Photo Credit: Greg Vorster.*

Reinforced rubber rain jacket and pants are important for your outer layer of rain protection. The pants can have suspenders, or even better, a properly-fitting elastic waistband. The jacket should be tough, reinforced rubber. You may only use this gear when it rains very heavily, because in light or occasional rain you can plant wearing only a polypro shirt and pants, which will dry in minutes, or add the wool sweater for slightly heavier warm rain. Other good heavy rain gear is PVC. If you buy rain gear, make sure it's reinforced. Straight plastic or rubber will shred within minutes of you getting out on the block. Good rain gear can cost well over \$150, but should last a couple seasons,

and will keep you dry and warm. Some planters prefer to use a heavy rubber poncho over their other layers, since this system allows considerable freedom of movement.

I've had very good luck wearing rubber or caulked chainsaw boots, a pair of sweatpants or long underwear, and a pair of black Coleman rain pants (with inside lining) from Canadian Tire. This will keep your bottom half happy. For your upper body, you can wear a long sleeve shirt and wool sweater or fleece, and have an optional rain jacket for the heavy downpours. I don't use a really heavy/thick rain-jacket, because I rely on my wool Henley to keep me warm if the temperature is really low, and if the temperature is warmer I won't even bother with the wool sweater (or ditch the raincoat and allow myself to get really soaked).

Should you buy Gore-Tex type rain gear? Gore-Tex is the outdoor person's miracle substance. However, the efficiency while planting is not certain, because planting tends to get you dirty, and dirty GoreTex does not work very well. GoreTex is also vulnerable to tearing by snags, etc. If you are planting in the Interior, or anywhere where there's infrequent rain, you might be able to use it, but on the Coast, it's going to get shredded just like anything else. Balance purchases such as this against your budget. For the past several years of coastal planting, I've been using the mid-grade Helly Hansen rain gear, and it has treated me quite well. You'll never find a better testing ground for rain gear than on the north end of Vancouver Island – we sometimes only get three or four days without rain during the entire two-month spring coastal planting season.

Jon at Raven Studios agrees with some of the information above, but believes that conventional gear is tailored for "casual" work in the rain. For planters looking for a longer-term investment, or for those working on coastal projects, these comments that he shared might be of interest:

*"Polypro and Goretex are for hippies who want to look cool at Starbucks, not for working men in the bush. Let me give you the real scoop on outdoor work-wear: it is called 'wool.' Use wool for socks, underwear, shirts and sweaters, period. Virgin Wool is what you want, to be exact, which is full length fibers rather than clippings from the mill floor. This takes care of three things: (1) it is not itchy, (2) it does not "fuzz", matt up into little balls, or fall apart, and (3) it does not smell over time. Properly woven wool not only keeps you warm when wet, but also repels water rather than absorb it. It also breaths better during strenuous activity and lasts forever. The best rain gear is made from 100% cotton "tin-cloth" with an oil finish. If you want the best gear for working in the bush get "Filson" at [www.filson.com](http://www.filson.com). It costs a lot, but there is nothing better anywhere. But that is probably a moot point because tree planters tend to be smelly, patchouli-oil wearing, cheap-skate hippies and granola crunchers who don't care if they wear rotten smelly cloths that fall apart after one season."*

Well said, Jon. Wool is wonderful.

## **Work Pants**

Planting pants need keep the sun and branches off your legs, and keep the bugs out. A light, baggy pair of cotton pants (or cotton long johns worn with an old pair of shorts over top) works well in dry weather. Unless you invest in proper high-quality work pants (not necessary in your first year), your pants will probably get destroyed in two months, so some planters don't like to spend a fortune on expensive work pants. For hot and bug-free days, a ragged pair of thigh-length shorts is nice. Some planters even wear shorts almost constantly, however, when one sees the discomfort that they suffer with poor weather and/or bugs, and the multiple lacerations (which, when bleeding, attract the bugs even more), you might wonder about their general sanity. Wearing a pair of tights under your shorts can make a big difference in long term comfort. I've sometimes found some nice medium-quality work pants at Costco & Walmart that I've found to be very useful. You probably only need to spend \$40 to get a pair of work pants that will probably last for a full season (although at that price, you should probably pick up a couple pairs). You might be able to find inexpensive cargo pants with "zip-off" leggings that let you turn the pants into a decent pair of shorts on a hot day. Professional planters working for coastal contractors will probably not be allowed to wear shorts. It's also a great idea to check out used clothing/thrift stores such as Value Village, Frenchy's, and Salvation Army, to look for "disposable deals."

Don't wear blue jeans while planting. It doesn't matter how comfortable they feel while you're cruising around town. They are terrible pants to be wearing once they get wet. Old pairs of jeans are not suitable work pants.

## **Long Underwear/Sweat Pants**

When it's cold out, wearing long underwear or sweats under your work pants can help. These items are also very comfortable when worn under rain pants, usually much more so than regular work pants. Typical long underwear brands which are more form-fitting are probably a much better idea than sweatpants. Some people think they would be better off bringing sweatpants, because they can be worn in public, but you'll soon learn that when you're in the planting camp, seeing people wearing just long underwear is commonplace and not at all out of the ordinary (although people might stare if you wear long underwear by itself in town). Try to avoid cotton underwear, again because you'll be very cold once it gets wet. Also, be aware that your long underwear will almost always be wet – if not from rain leaking in, from sweating. Some people prefer to wear courtesy shorts over top of long underwear.

## **Belt**

If your work pants all fit you comfortably and you don't think you'll need a belt, bring one anyway. Within a month or so, you'll be at least two or three notches smaller, and you'll be annoyed because

your pants will be falling down all the time. If you want to save money and not bother bringing a belt, you can always use a piece of rope as a substitute, although it gets annoying having to untie the rope every time you need to pee.

### **T-Shirts, Long Sleeved Work Shirts**

You can get cheap cotton clothing at thrift stores. Mark's Work Wearhouse sells quality work-wear including pants, socks, and outerwear, although the prices are high. Some of the clothing mentioned above can be bought at MEC or other outdoor places, although again, be prepared to pay more. You would do well to look for deals, because your clothes will get dirty, abused, and destroyed in the bush. Don't load up on designer branded names at Eddie Bauer or J.Crew or L.L. Bean. Go with proper work clothing suppliers if you're looking for higher-priced items that are designed to last through very rugged conditions. If you want to save money and go with more disposable options, thrift stores are a great source. Nobody cares what you look like.

As far as shirts are concerned, bring a couple of ratty white T-shirts and a baggy white cotton turtleneck. The T-shirts keep you cool, while a turtleneck (or any long-sleeved baggy work shirt) is good for keeping the bugs away. A heavy jacket is also useful for cold mornings at the start of May. Cotton clothing is great when the weather is warm, but as I already mentioned, cotton is not good in cold rain. Diversify your clothing portfolio, so you have options. A great place to buy cheap "throwaway" t-shirts is Value Village. Sometimes you'll even find amazing deals on really high-end clothing that other people don't want.

### **Fleece Sweatshirts**

Fleeces are somewhat bulky, and therefore not always the best items to wear while planting, except maybe when it is cool in early May. However, they are very useful in the morning on the way to the block (to keep warm), and sometimes again on the way back to camp. Fleeces are also popular in light warm rains, and they're good to wear around camp in the evening. They're not be as useful as a wool sweater when they get wet.

### **Socks and Underwear**

Socks are very important. Buy at least a dozen pairs of light polypropylene work socks, and a similar number of pairs of wool/nylon blend thick work socks. The light ones obviously go on first, with the wool on the outside. This double-layer setup keeps you from getting blisters, and these types of socks keep your feet dry when you sweat, and are warm when wet. Cotton socks are useless because they stay wet, and are cold when wet. When buying wool socks, try for an 80% wool and 20% nylon mix, which will last longer. Bama socks, or other types of polyethylene liners, are also excellent. A

neat trick if you don't like wet feet is to put baggies or bread bags between your inner and outer socks. Eventually, your feet will still be completely wet from sweat, but at least this is a gradual process, so it isn't as painful and shocking as accidentally dumping your foot in a puddle.



**Figure 4.14**  
Layering Your Socks.

*Many planters wear wool socks (or bama socks) over polypro inner socks.*

I've had some pros tell me that compression socks are the way to go. They're more expensive, but are worth looking into if you have room in your budget. I haven't used them, but that's probably a mistake on my part, based on what I've been told.



**Figure 4.15**  
Wool Socks.

*We've covered wool sweaters, wool scarves, and now, wool socks. Are you starting to get the picture?*



**Figure 4.16**  
Bama Socks.

*Bama socks don't come up past the ankle. They're only designed for cushion around your foot, not around your lower leg. They're quite useful to act as a spacer in a pair of boots that are slightly too large, and are typically worn over a pair of polypro socks.*

For regular underwear, bring whatever you're comfortable with. Long underwear is discussed above.

## Hat

The hat is an essential item. Without a sunhat, you are much more susceptible to getting a sun-burn, heat exhaustion, or sunstroke. Too much sun can also make you tired, and a bad sunburn can be miserable. On rainy days, your hat doubles in function by keeping some of the water out of your eyes. If you wear glasses, a ball cap or a Tilley hat is indispensable on rainy days. The best thing to use is a broad-brimmed cotton or canvas sunhat, which will keep the rain and sun out of your eyes and ears - baseball caps and bandannas are also acceptable. Keeping the sun out of your eyes reduces eyestrain and makes you less tired at the day's end. This is important because planting with sunglasses has not been proven to be feasible or effective, because you can't see well into the holes that you're making. Do you ever see any photos of people planting while wearing sunglasses? There's a reason for that.



**Figure 4.17**  
Wearing a Hat.

*The main function of a hat is to keep the sun (and rain) off the top of your head. If it has a fairly large brim, that's even better, because you really want to try to protect the back of your neck too.*



**Figure 4.18**  
Hat With a Wide Brim.

*This planter's sun hat, with a large brim, is especially good at keeping direct sunlight and rain off the back of his neck.*

Another good reason for having a hat is to keep your hair out of your eyes while you're bending down to plant. If you have long hair, a hat or bandanna can be very helpful.

## Gloves

Planters who don't wear gloves sometimes get sore hands, and are hesitant about sticking their fingers into a shovel hole, because it can hurt. As a compromise, some planters used to wear duct

tape on the fingers of their planting hand. However, it's hard to say what chemicals can be found in the glue on the duct tape. I don't recommend using duct tape anymore. Duct tape will not keep your hands warm if you're planting in cold ground. Bare-handed planting has been banned at most safety-conscious planting companies, for good reasons. Wear gloves.



**Figure 4.19**

Protect Your Hands.

*Wearing gloves while planting will keep your hands from getting scratched up, and will reduce infections. I planted bare-handed for many years. Now that comfortable and durable light gloves are available, I don't ever plant bare-handed anymore. Gloves are usually mandatory.*

There are three main reasons for wearing gloves: Mechanical protection, chemical protection, and hygiene. Mechanical protection is important to protect you from cuts, scrapes, punctures, and other impacts to your hands. Duct tape does this job poorly, and inevitably leaves some skin exposed. Duct tape does nothing to limit chapping, drying, and cracking of the skin.

While the chemicals on trees may pose only a minor hazard to health, this is only the case if proper precautions are taken, including wearing gloves. WorkSafe regulations require that workers utilize appropriate precautions when handling chemicals, so there is a health benefit to wearing gloves.

With respect to hygiene, remember that everybody poops. Most planters do this on the block. With duct taped hands, that tape stays on all day. Before poop, during poop, and after poop. The majority of "stomach bugs" are noroviruses, enteroviruses, or rotavirus, which are mainly spread through oral-fecal transmission. Although this is gross, what this means is that poor hygiene leads to microscopic bits of feces finding their way into your mouth, or someone else's mouth. Gloves are helpful in this respect, especially if they are removed before a planter gets into the shared crew truck at the end of the day, and washed with the rest of your laundry on the day off. Remember too that washing your hands thoroughly with soap and water before dinner (and any time you leave the outhouses) is a key component to breaking the chain of transmission of any communicable diseases.

If you're trying to figure out what gloves are the best for planters, there are a couple brands that are especially popular. One brand I like using is the black Nitr-Dex gloves (you can get these at IRL, Motion Industries, and other suppliers). The ones that I use say "Nitr-Dex, 9/L CE 73376, Viking" on them. Although I started my career as a duct-tape-finger planter, I've become a huge fan of gloves over the past several years. It's amazing how often planters that bare-hand get cuts which eventually get infected, then they miss days of work. That's very short-sighted, because it's such an easy problem to prevent!



**Figure 4.20**  
Nitridex Outer Gloves.

*Some people wear these gloves only, and others also wear an inner glove underneath. These gloves are lightweight and fairly durable for their cost, at approximately \$2.50 per pair (priced at IRL). Wash them by hand with cold water and let them air dry.*

Many planters wear two layers of gloves, especially during cold weather. In addition to what I described above, wearing a nitrile inner glove can be a huge help. Don't confuse nitrile with nitridex. Nitrile gloves are like dishwashing gloves. Some people wear them as an inner layer because it keeps their hands completely clean. Others dislike the nitrile inner layer because their hands get too sweaty and wrinkled. However, the real game-changer is when you realize how good these are for insulating your fingers on especially cold, wet, rainy (or snowy) days. By keeping a thin layer of relatively-warm sweat against your fingers, instead of exposure to the ground temperature, your fingers stay several degrees warmer and remain more nimble. These inner gloves can often make the difference between being able to plant versus sitting in the truck on an especially cold rainy or snowy morning, although you may abandon the use of inner nitrile once the weather warms up. The best thing is that you can buy a package of probably 25-50 pairs of these inner gloves for around \$10-15, which is more than enough for your entire season. Try looking for mechanics' nitrile gloves at an auto parts place, and ask for the 8mm thickness. They usually come in sizes of S, M, L, XL, and XXL.



**Figure 4.21**  
Inner Nitrile Gloves.

*Not all planters wear inner gloves. However, they're a game-changer for keeping your hands warm if you need to plant in especially cold weather. They rip fairly easily if worn by themselves, so most planters wear an outer glove over top. Look for 8mm thickness.*



**Figure 4.22**  
Boxes of Nitrile Gloves.

*There are a lot of different brands of nitrile gloves. A good place to find them quickly is to go to any auto parts reseller such as UAP/NAPA. Mechanics also use these gloves.*

Remember that your body pulls blood from your extremities to the core when you're cold. One of the first steps towards having warm fingers is to have a warm torso, which goes back to wearing layers of wool and other proper clothing.

People often get confused between nitrile and nitridex gloves. Nitrile gloves are like dishwashing gloves. Nitridex is a brand name of a glove like a gardening glove, but with some light rubber backing.

For more information about gloves, see this video: [www.replant.ca/gloves](http://www.replant.ca/gloves)

## **Town Clothes & Boots**

You will want to have one or two sets of town clothes (clean pants, nice shirt, clean jacket, etc.). I highly suggest that you wrap these garments securely in a couple layers of plastic, and store them in some sort of pack in your tent where they can stay safe and dry. You should also have a pair of town shoes or town boots. Hiking boots are great, so long as you don't make the mistake of wearing them while planting and ruining them. Along with the town clothes that you wear around town, which might soon turn into your best "dress" outfit, you may want to have a second backup clean(ish) shirt and pair of sweats, so you have something to wear while doing your laundry and errands on the day off.

## **Where to Buy Gear**

Camping gear can be bought at several places. You can get stuff very cheaply at Canadian Tire, Walmart, Amazon, etc. For better camping equipment, there are some upscale places around. Many planters will debate whether it is smarter to invest money in high-end tents, or to just buy cheaper ones and replace them more frequently during your career. The choice is yours.

If you are in Prince George, and buying any type of planting gear, your very first stop will probably have to be at IRL. If you're going north on the Hart Highway, just after you go over the bridge (by

the brewery) and before you go over the overpass, you'll see IRL down to the right. Their toll-free phone number is 1-800-663-6843, and they have a website at [www.irlsupplies.com](http://www.irlsupplies.com).

If you're in Courtenay, Nanaimo, or Surrey, a good option is to visit Ono Safety. Their three stores all carry planting gear and other forestry/camping gear, although the selection in the Courtenay store is usually quite limited. However, they can order other gear in quite quickly.

You may have to do some digging around to find the best places to buy various types of gear in other provinces. Motion Canada has outlets throughout Canada, and can order planting gear in, but you may be better to just order it from BushPro directly and have it shipped to you. The BushPro website can be found here: <http://www.bushpro.ca>

BushPro makes all kinds of planting gear, and they're the de facto standard throughout the entire industry. If you go onto their website, you'll see lots of links to retailers across Canada that carry their equipment.

## Toiletries and Medicinal

### The Basics

The basic toiletries that you bring should include anything that you might bring to a cottage for an overnight trip in the summer: Soap, shampoo, towel, deodorant, hair brush or comb, razor, and tampons. You should also bring some of the things that might not be used on an overnight trip, but which would come in handy eventually, such as fingernail clippers and q-tips. Some people suggest bringing band-aids. That is probably a good idea, in case you get a significant cut that you want to cover at night, or any time you're around food/kitchen/people. An alternative at night is to keep it exposed (exposure to air helps a cut to heal much faster), but then to put a band-aid (and duct tape over the band-aid to keep it in place) over the cut during the day, while planting, so you don't get a lot of dirt in the cut. However, you'll probably find that you don't want to bother using band-aids on ninety percent of your cuts. Having a tube of Polysporin is a really good idea, because if you apply some at night, it will keep a lot of those cuts from becoming infected.

I highly, highly recommend that you buy a canister of handi-wipes for your tent, to keep your cuts as clean as possible at night. Wash them frequently, in the morning and the evening, to prevent infection (apply Polysporin after washing, when appropriate). It seems like at least ten percent of my planters miss days of work each season because of simple preventable infections on their hands or fingers. That's an expensive mistake to make! Keep it clean, so it's less likely to become infected.

## Makeup

Women probably don't need to bring much makeup. You definitely don't need it in the bush, and you might even be teased if you wear makeup in camp during a shift. Some women do bring some very basic makeup for nights off in town. Remember though, that planters are a very down-to-earth sort of group. If you want to apply a lot of makeup on a night off in camp, go ahead, but you may feel slightly out of place. Many people who go tree planting are not the type to worry much about make-up. Do what you want, but it's great to embrace your natural beauty.

## Hand Cream/Moisturizer

Think about the fact that you'll be inserting your hand into the ground, over and over, a couple thousand times a day. Your skin will dry out and crack, and your hand will hurt. Wearing gloves will help, but some people don't like to wear gloves. If you don't wear gloves, you're going to get a lot of cuts and scrapes, which is why I really advise that all planters wear light work gloves. Either way, a liberal application of hand cream every night will make your hands feel a lot better over time. In my early days of planting, everyone said, "Make sure you get vitamin E hand cream." It definitely seems to help your hands stay healthy. Wrap your hand cream in a towel during camp moves, so if it gets squished and explodes in your duffle bag, everything else that you own won't be coated in lotion.

## Sunscreen

You *will* get sunburned. If you're lucky, it will happen in stages, and you won't blister badly. Remember that you'll be planting in the mountains at significantly higher elevations than you're used to. The air is thinner, and the sun's radiation is stronger. You can burn quite quickly, even on freezing cold days in early May. Once you've been planting for a month, you'll probably go without sun screen (until it gets really hot). Planters can often be seen planting without shirts even in late April, any time that the weather is even minimally nice, because you generate so much body heat while planting. However, I often wonder if a lot of tree planters are going to suffer from skin cancer when they're older.

At a minimum, for the first week you're planting, make sure you put sunscreen on the tips of your ears, even if the weather is cold. The tops of your ears are frequently the first part of your body to burn and blister. Don't buy weak sunscreen – get SPF 15 at the bare minimum. Sunscreens which have titanium oxide or zinc oxide as the active ingredients are the best for UVA/B protection. These are the *only* two ingredients which are recognized as effective for UV protection. And remember, medical professionals all say that you should use sunscreen any time that you're exposed to direct sunlight, even after you have a tan.

## **Solarcaine**

Even if you follow the advice in the above paragraph, you may end up with a solid sunburn at least once near the start of the season. If that's the case, Solarcaine is worth its weight in gold. Liberal applications of this stuff every four hours for two days can really minimize the effects of a bad burn. Don't leave home without it.

## **Fingernail Clippers**

The need for these is self-explanatory. However, a bit of advice – don't cut your nails short. Always cut them down so they're still a few millimeters longer than you would in the city. You will always want to keep a slight fingernail, to help protect the tips of your fingers, since you're always digging in the dirt. Fingernail clippers serve a double function, since they are also very useful for digging thorns out of your hands.

## **Vaseline, Lip Balm**

When planting, you become dehydrated. Between the dehydration from sweating and the sun on your face, your lips will inevitably become very dry, and may become chapped and sunburned. In extreme cases (not uncommon), your lips may even split and bleed. Applying some sort of lip balm every day will help, and will make eating less painful.

## **Zincofax/Penaten/Lanacane**

Diaper rash is a form of dermatitis. Adults can get diaper rash. This is a frequent problem for planters. Dermatitis is inflamed skin. It may often turn reddish. It will be itchy or uncomfortable. It is caused by either constantly wet skin, or chafing, or a combination of both. Most planters are embarrassed to say that they have diaper rash, so they refer to it as "bum chafing." It's quite uncomfortable. It usually happens right down in your bum crack and southerly regions, due to the combination of heat and sweat and frequent movement/rubbing.

Zincofax (zinc oxide ointment) and Penaten are both creams that you rub on affected parts. They're best used as a preventive measure when you know that you're about to suffer from chafing. Lanacane is some sort of miracle ointment from the heavens. It's slightly more expensive (it comes in a tube like polysporin) but Lanacane is great when you've already gotten a bad case of chafing. Lanacane contains benzocaine, which is a local anesthetic. It provides a useful barrier and also acts as a salve for the skin, like the other suggestions, but it also numbs the area and significantly reduces discomfort while your skin is healing.

## **Vitamin Supplements (optional)**

Tree planters burn a lot of energy. While a normal adult may only require from 1200 to 2400 calories per day to function normally over the long term, planters may need anywhere from 5000 to 7000 calories per day, or even more. If you're going planting to lose weight (which is not a good reason to go planting), do NOT diet intentionally. Trust me – you can eat very well and eat large quantities if you are planting hard, and you will still lose weight. Many planters lose between ten and thirty pounds in their first six to eight weeks of planting. Anyway, the point of this is that it is an accepted fact that planters need to eat large quantities of proper, healthy foods, in order to remain in peak productive shape. Because of this, the cooks usually supply a very balanced diet, and in very generous portions.

You are almost certainly going to get all the vitamins and minerals you need from eating the regular meals that the cooks provide. However, having said this, I still need to address the option of taking vitamin supplements. To be honest, I'm not yet convinced that this is a good idea. I've always been of the mind that if you eat a balanced diet, you don't need to take supplements. However, when you're planting, your body is working double-overtime and really pushing itself to the limits, so I concede that it probably can't hurt to be able to augment your vitamin intake slightly.

I certainly think that your intake of fluids and salts (sodium, magnesium, potassium, etc.) is especially important to be aware of. Drinking water sweetened with sugar and juice crystals probably isn't the best approach, but drinking a lot of water IS important. When I'm planting, I sometimes make weak Gatorade from powder (purchased at Costco), although that is mostly designed to make my day more interesting, not due to the health aspects. I figure that the salts and other stuff in Gatorade are just a nice bonus, and are better for me than pop or sugared juices. However, I still drink a lot of water even on the days when I have a bit of Gatorade as an extra treat.

## **Medicine for Heartburn or Indigestion (optional)**

If you ever suffer from heartburn or indigestion, it might be smart to bring some Zantac 360, which I find works much better than Tums or other antacids and alginates. Of course, you can buy a cheaper generic equivalent, rather than spending extra on the Zantac brand name. If you eat a big breakfast, you may end up getting indigestion while you are planting in the morning, both because of having a full stomach, and also because you keep bending over all morning. The drawback of things like Tums or Zantac is that they partially neutralize the acids in your stomach, which means that you end up digesting your food more slowly.

Another common problem happens in the evening. You may end up eating several plates of dinner (very common) and then try to go to bed an hour later. If your stomach doesn't have time to digest

the food before you go to bed, you may start to suffer. Rather than staying up late to allow yourself time to digest a huge meal, it may be better to consider trying to eat more throughout the day. Don't binge at breakfast and supper. Carry a big lunch with you on the block that you can eat in small portions throughout the day. This also gives you a more constant supply of energy, which is much healthier than binge eating. Unfortunately, I find that I'm not comfortable eating a lot during the day while planting. My solution is to take a lot of food, and eat a lot of it on the drive home. That way, you can start digesting it about an hour or so before having a dinner, and you don't need to have such a large meal at dinnertime.

Zantac originally contained ranitidine but now contains famotidine (which is safer). It is most useful when taken about half an hour before a meal. Antacids or alginates such as Tums or Gaviscon work better after meals. But again, I recommend Zantac over antacids.

### **Heat Rub (optional)**

I've never used heat rub products such as Rub-A535 or Tiger Balm, and I don't know if they are that useful. Certainly, I don't think they are extremely common in planting camps, although I know that some people do use them. The problem with these products, I think, is that they are designed to target specific localized muscles. In planting, your entire body will be aching for a while until you really get into the season, and heat rubs may not be a decent solution.

Some people prefer to use an "internal" solution to their aches and pains, like a can of beer and a muscle relaxant before bed. I think some of these "solutions" probably offer more psychological help than physical assistance, but if it makes you happy, go for it. Don't overdo it though. Even small amounts of alcohol in your bloodstream lessen the effectiveness of your sleep, and over-the-counter drugs are hard on your kidneys and liver (which are already under a lot of pressure while planting). Drink major amounts of water, regardless of what else you're consuming.

### **Painkillers, Muscle Relaxants, Anti-Inflammatories (optional)**

Pain relievers and muscle relaxants are certainly recommended by some planters. If you need this sort of help to keep you planting, then do whatever it takes. However, remember that in the end it is your body that makes the decision about whether or not you can handle the physical aspects of being a highballer, and the drugs often don't make any difference except for psychological. If you can plant with chemical assistance, then you can certainly also plant without chemicals, if you put your mind to it.

Aleve (a brand name for Naproxen) is an anti-inflammatory. Instead of masking the symptoms of a problem; it tries to fix the problem. Of course, this is only useful if the problem relates to inflammation. Naproxen is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID). It works by reducing

hormones that cause inflammation (and pain) in the body. Naproxen is especially effective for treating inflammation caused by conditions including tendonitis, ankylosing spondylitis (which encompasses lower back and hip pain), bursitis, arthritis, and menstrual cramps. Painkillers are more likely to simply mask the problem without solving it. Here are some suggestions:

- Avoid mixing Tylenol and alcohol, as this combination is extremely hard on the liver.
- Avoid the overuse of Ibuprofen or other NSAIDS, as they can lead to ulcers (especially in combination with alcohol).
- Naproxen/Aleve is especially hard on the kidneys if you're already dehydrated. However, naproxen is one of the safest pain relievers for your liver, much better than Tylenol.
- Tylenol and Ibuprofen are both useful for sunburns.

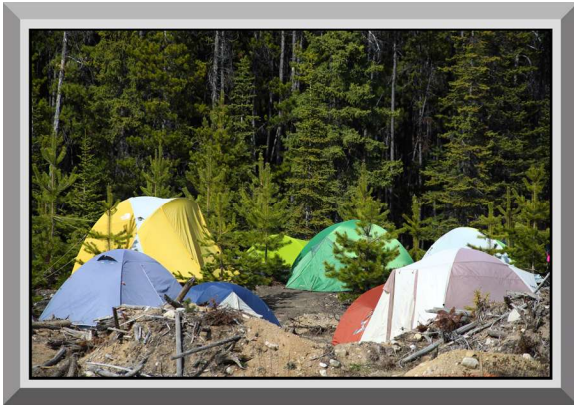
## **Antihistamines**

I cannot say enough good things about antihistamines. If you know that you *occasionally* suffer from allergies, bring these. If you know that you *frequently* suffer significant acute seasonal attacks of hay-fever, you may want to look for another job. The amount of pollens that you'll come into contact with while working in the bush can be phenomenally higher than what you'll encounter in the city, so be aware. You should know that taking antihistamines whenever you have an attack is not the smart way to approach the situation. If you do that, you'll still potentially have a couple of hours of downtime while your body recover from red eyes, sneezing, or even puffed-up eyeballs and inability to breathe clearly in more acute cases. If you are even slightly worried about allergies, your best bet is to buy a lot of antihistamines and start a regular daily regimen about two days before you go into the bush, and keep it up throughout the season. Your body takes a few days to become fully prepared (internally) once you start taking the pills, so if you start acting in a preventative manner from the start, and have extra drugs on hand for the occasions when you are working in extreme conditions, then you'll probably be alright.

## **Camping Equipment and Miscellaneous Gear**

### **Tent**

If you're hesitant to spend a lot of money on an expensive high-end tent, go ahead and buy one from Canadian Tire. Just be aware, however, that you may end up throwing it out at the end of the season. Also, even if you expect to be sleeping alone, you will probably want to buy a three-person or four-person tent. This will give you adequate storage space for your clothing and other gear. If you're sharing a tent with a partner, you will probably want a six-person tent.



**Figure 4.23**  
Living In A Tent.

*There are many different types of tents available.  
Don't get the very cheapest, but don't overspend.*

If you do end up taking your tent home at the end of the season, and it's wet when you pack it up, make sure you get it opened up to dry at the earliest opportunity. Otherwise, you'll have to deal with mold, and you'll probably end up throwing it away.

Tents are designed to resist rain, but a tarp over the tent helps. Tents are moderately good at resisting wind, if staked down properly, but are almost always still at risk of collapse during strong winds. Tents definitely aren't designed to withstand snow load. If you're sleeping overnight during a snowstorm, there's a good chance that it might collapse on you, unless you can brush the snow off every few hours before it accumulates too heavily. Hopefully you won't have too many snowstorms during your planting season.

Don't set your tent up under what's known as a "danger tree." You'll probably be told to move it, for safety. Trees can fall over in the middle of the night while you're sleeping. Minimize risk by not sleeping under a tree that's obviously at risk of blowing over or falling down. I remember recently telling one specific planter to move their tent because there was a tree overhead that looked like it was about to blow over onto the tent. The planter moved their tent, and a few days later, the tree fell over during a windstorm in the night, landing on the spot where the tent had been originally.

## **Sleeping Bag**

One of my strongest recommendations in terms of buying gear is that if you're going to splurge anywhere, spend extra money and get a good sleeping bag. My parents bought me a high quality sleeping bag when I started planting. I finally had to throw it away fourteen years later because it was getting too ripped. That sleeping bag lasted me through all those seasons, and it helped keep me warm on some painfully freezing nights. Don't get me wrong – I consider myself to be very "thermodynamic" and enjoy cold temperatures, but I can't imagine how cold I would have been if I had just owned a normal sleeping bag. Make sure that the bag you buy is good to twenty degrees below freezing (Celsius). Make sure that it is machine-washable. "Mummy bags" are designed to be narrower and tighter, and the heat that they trap therefore needs to warm a smaller area, so they are said to be better for the single person. However, if you are not sleeping alone, buy a normal square or rectangular sleeping bag, or get extra fancy and buy two bags that are exactly the same, so you can

open them up face-to-face and zip them up to each other, to form one huge sleeping bag. Find a laundromat with a double-loader and wash your sleeping bag at the start of each successive season when temperatures are lowest, because a clean bag does a slightly better job of insulating you. You might want to wash it a couple times mid-season too, just so it stays cleaner.

If you live in a large city or near a good thrift shop, look for sleeping bags there. Why spend \$250 on a good new sleeping bag if you can buy two used ones for maybe \$30 each. You'll be far warmer with two than with one, although a second bag is extra to carry around. But it's comfortable. If you get a sleeping bag from a thrift shop, I'd recommend that you wash it, twice, with a bit of bleach.



**Figure 4.24**

Get a Warm Sleeping Bag.

*I cannot emphasize strongly enough how important it is to invest in a good sleeping bag that is rated for -20°C. Otherwise, you're going to be very cold and unhappy at night in early May. Here we see a planter napping in a lightweight summer sleeping bag. He looks cold.*

As far as temperature ratings go, if you buy a sleeping bag that says "good in freezing weather" or "good to -5 degrees," you might as well just lie on the ground at night under open skies, wrapped in toilet paper. You will freeze. Even when you buy a sleeping bag that says "good to -20" (which is what you should aim for), be aware that you'll still be cold when the temperatures are low at night. That rating is somewhat misleading. That sleeping bag will not be "good" at -20, which is pretty fucking cold. It will be, "barely enough to keep you from dying of hypothermia, but you'll still be very cold." I always like to double up with two sleeping bags for those really cold nights. Once you're a month into your season, the night-time temperatures won't be so bad, so you'll eventually be quite comfortable at night.

Another unrelated trick to keep warm at night is to wear mittens (not gloves) and a scarf or neck-warmer. Those both make a huge difference on those especially chilly nights in late April.

## Foamie

A "foamie" is a large foam mattress, which is usually either three or four inches in thickness, which you should place on the floor of your tent to sleep on. Foamies not cheap, perhaps around \$100 each, but many planters prefer them to air mattresses. The only real drawback of a foamie is that it is bulky during a camp move or when you're travelling.

An inflatable air mattress is another viable option. The big advantage of an inflatable mattress is that it can be compacted for camp moves by letting the air out. However, many people find that their air mattresses eventually get punctured and become useless. Also, at night, when the temperature drops, the air compacts, and you'll sometimes wake up in the middle of the night to find that your mattress feels half deflated. A foamie is probably better.

### Day Bag (Kit Bag or Backpack)

A day bag is essential for carrying all of your little treasures: Extra gloves, duct-tape, lunch, a small Tupperware with painkillers and antihistamines and your tally book, a knife, suntan lotion, extra flagging tape, a thermos, a Ziploc or plastic bag with toilet paper, and other critical items. Here's a tip for using a thermos: pre-heat it by leaving a bit of hot water in it for two minutes. Dump this out and then add your coffee/tea/whatever. This can make a huge difference in keeping your beverages hot until supper instead of just until lunch.



**Figure 4.25**  
Day Bag.

*Your day bag will be used to carry all the random stuff that comes in handy during a day of planting.*

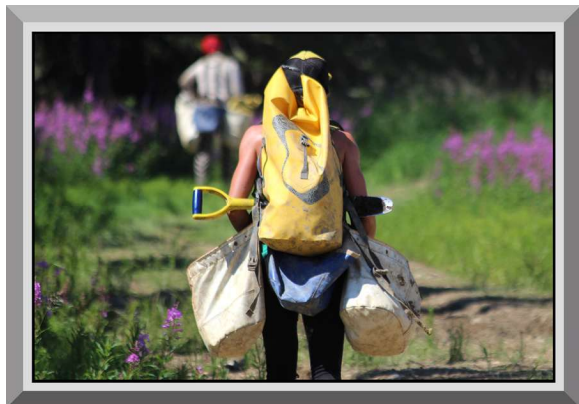
Be careful while your lunch is in your day bag, make sure that it stays zipped up. A few planting companies allow planters (or at the very least, crew leaders) to bring dogs. If dogs are permitted on the block, they will sometimes raid planters' lunches when nobody is looking. Interestingly, I've also watched crows and ravens open zippers on backpacks to get at the lunches inside. They're incredibly smart, and this is a very common problem. After being treated to a lunch in a half-open backpack, they'll go around opening other day bags to look for more treats.



**Figure 4.26**  
Gear at Cache.

*There are many different sizes and shapes and colour of day-bags, dry-bags, and backpacks available, so everyone's gear will probably look different.*

A dry-bag is an especially wise choice for a day bag, because it's waterproof. A cheap 40-litre PVC dry-bag can be purchased from MEC, Amazon, or other retailers for \$50 or less, and it'll help guarantee that you have access to dry food, clothing, and other supplies even on the most miserable of rain days. A day bag that doesn't keep your belongings completely dry is probably a waste of money.



**Figure 4.27**  
Dry Bag.

*A dry bag is designed, first and foremost, to keep your belongings dry. The dry bag pictured here is one of the very best types. The only drawback with this style of dry bag is that it's a bit harder to find things than with a zipped hockey-style day bag.*

## **Insect Repellent**

The best way to deal with bugs is by wearing appropriate clothing. Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and maybe a bug hat. DEET is evil and deadly stuff, and is an important ingredient in almost all bug repellents. Most spray type repellents only contain 15-30% DEET, whereas the little containers of liquid that you rub on your skin are generally 75% to 95% DEET. Muskol and Deep Woods Off in liquid form are 95% DEET, and the most effective repellents, but they are becoming increasingly hard to find. I suspect that retailers prefer to sell the aerosol form because that's what consumers prefer. I swear by DEET, have used it in mass quantities for years, and would certainly suffer without it, but then again, the downside is that I'll probably have mutant children someday due to the chemicals that my body has absorbed from these bug sprays. DEET can cause severe allergic reactions in some people, and in others it simply burns the skin. DEET has also been known to melt plastic and parts of your planting equipment. Despite this, DEET is rated by the medical profession as being quite chemically safe for humans, other than occasional cases of skin reactions.

Do not spray insect repellants containing DEET when you're inside a truck, or in a manner whereby the spray could end up coating the interior moulding. The chemicals in insect repellants can melt some plastics, which can cause thousands of dollars to the interior of the vehicle.

Icaridine (also known as Picaridin) is a relatively new insect repellent which is found to be even more effective than DEET, so if you can find products with this active ingredient, they are backed up by clinical evidence. This product won't damage plastics or synthetics. The New England Journal of Medicine has rated it as safe, and significantly longer-lasting than an application of DEET. The only

potential drawback is that studies have not yet been done on the long-term effects of human exposure to these products.

Some people say that Skin-So-Soft Bath Oil is effective. They're wrong. Citronella is another product championed as an alternative to DEET. It seems to have limited effectiveness for a very short time, but it tends to evaporate quickly, and causes skin irritation even more frequently than DEET products. Besides, if you use those products, you'll smell so good that you'll have bears and bumblebees chasing after you all day (ok, maybe that's an exaggeration).



**Figure 4.28**

Aerosol Spray Cans of Insect Repellent.

*Insect repellent goes by many names, including bug dope, bug spray, and by reference to brand names such as Off or Muskol. Most of these repellents contain DEET as an active ingredient.*

The biggest problem with bugs is mental. Bugs can be just incredible if it is your first time in the woods, especially when you go further north, close to Nunavet. You can look up and see so many bugs directly above you that they look thicker than stars in the sky when you're out on the ocean. At the right time of year, you can look at a planter standing still on a landing and count literally hundreds of mosquitoes on their back, especially if they are wearing dark clothing. Some people are bothered more by the incessant buzzing than by the actual bites. Every person deals with them differently, though most just use lots of DEET, long clothing, and try to ignore the noise. People who have planted outside of western Canada tell horror stories about bugs in other parts of the country. It seems that northern Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan are usually far, far worse for bugs than western Canada.

Bees, wasps, and hornets do not seem to be affected or deterred by insect repellent. They just fly around and ignore it. If you disturb their nest, they are going to come after you with a vengeance, although if you can move away several meters, they may abandon pursuit. Their stings are painful and may cause an allergic reaction. There are sting treatment kits available (anti-histamines and epi-pen needles for extreme circumstances), but since repellents don't work, the best approach is caution. If you disturb a nest, jump back. If you know that you have allergies to these insects, or are ever stung in the neck, notify your first aid attendant right away, just to be safe (swelling can constrict breathing).

Black flies, mosquitoes, and no-see-ums are deterred by repellents containing DEET. If you do get bitten by these insects, the bites can cause irritation, and multiple bites may even cause swelling, especially around the eyes and lips. Inhaling these insects happens frequently, and feels kind of

strange and uncomfortable. But hey, free protein. Get used to the feeling – it happens occasionally, no matter what you do. If you don't like using repellent, wear pants and long-sleeved clothing.

Deer flies and horse flies do not seem to be deterred by insect repellents. They go for bare flesh, probably not so much because they are seeking it with a vengeance, but because they happen to land on you. If they do (and this happens frequently if you are planting without a shirt when it is hot in July and August), then they may bite you if given the opportunity. The bites can be surprisingly painful. House flies are a smaller cousin of the deer and horse flies, and are also not deterred by repellents, but at least house flies don't bite. The only drawbacks to having house flies around is the buzzing noise, which seems to annoy some planters, and the fact that they transfer diseases fairly readily since they like to land and feast on the feces of various animals. House flies are a sign of filth nearby. You might also see stable flies or cluster flies, which are fairly similar-looking to house flies.

Ticks are apparently deterred by DEET-based insect repellent. Ticks are a big problem which is growing rapidly in many parts of Canada, thanks to climate warming. Some types of ticks can spread Lyme disease, which is starting to affect more and more Canadians. If you are attacked by a tick, don't try to remove it by prying or pulling it off – use a "tick removal tool." Every crew should own these, and every first aid kit should contain them. Do not apply Vaseline to try to make a tick back out – that's an urban myth and a bad idea, and never use heat either. I have more information at: [www.replant.ca/lyme](http://www.replant.ca/lyme)

If you are suffering from itchy bug bites, the best product is a hydrocortisone cream.

### **Battery Powered Coleman Lantern (optional)**

A flashlight is more of a priority than a lantern, but if you insist on reading at night to put you to sleep, a battery powered lantern is a wise investment. Whatever you do, don't have fires in your tent. Using a candle or open flame in a tent is an incredibly bad idea. Most tents are labeled as being "flame retardant" or "flame resistant," but I have seen tents that have gone up in flames in twenty to thirty seconds. Don't take a chance on burning yourself.

### **Alarm clock**

You'll want to make sure that you have a decent alarm clock. It would really suck to miss a day of work, and lose several hundred dollars, because your tent was far from camp and you slept in past the time that the trucks left for the blocks. Having said that, the camps should also have a roll call system in the mornings, so that if someone is not accounted for within fifteen minutes of when the trucks are about to head to the block, someone goes to check on that person's tent to see if they just slept late, or to see if the employee is sick or has been eaten by a bear during the night.

Some planters use their cell phones as alarm clocks, but most camps have limited power from the generators, and it can often be very hard to keep a cell phone charged when sixty people want to charge their phones at the same time (especially during cold weather, because batteries drain faster). Don't assume that you'll be able to recharge phones reliably. Wind-up alarms are the safest fall-back. If you do use your phone, make sure you put it on Flight Mode at night, and keep it warm somehow, so the battery doesn't drain as quickly.

## **Flashlight**

Having a flashlight is useful for general purposes, such as rummaging around in your tent after dark. You'll find that a good flashlight is worth its weight in gold the first time that you wake up at 2am and need to go to the outhouses on a moonless night. Just remember to bring batteries. By the way, you should remember to bring extra batteries for everything that you own. Cold nights are especially harsh on batteries, since cold temperatures seem to drain some batteries a lot faster. I don't understand why this happens, since I thought electricity travels more efficiently when there is less heat present. Anyway, deal with it, and bring extra batteries for your flashlight and alarm clocks and vibrators and other goodies. Modern LED flashlights are much more energy efficient than the old flashlights that we used in the 1990's. You may normally use a mobile device as a flashlight when you're in civilization, but you'll quickly find that you don't want to do this in the bush due to the possible difficulty of recharging a phone. An LED headband is extremely useful, probably better than a flashlight most of the time.

## **Camera (optional)**

It's nice to have a camera, to document your tree planting experience. However, many people are disappointed with the pictures that they take, because it is tough to take good pictures in the bush with a traditional camera. However, unless you have money to burn, you should not bring a good camera to the bush, because you will destroy it. For example, speaking in my extensive experience as a photographer, no matter how carefully you take care of your equipment, I find that an auto-focus type of 35mm lens will not last more than two seasons. It will get dirty, and it will no longer auto-focus. Dirt gets into every part of your equipment, no matter how careful you are. You can wrap your camera up in three layers of clothing and plastic, and only use it on sunny days, but you will still look at it in October when you get accustomed to city life and wonder how it got so much dirt on it. If you take the smart route and buy less expensive equipment, the quality of your photos will suffer. Also, you will not want to be out taking photos when you can be planting and making the big bucks.

Your best bet, if you have a phone with a good camera, is to use that. Most modern smart phones have cameras which take much better pictures than a traditional DSLR, for the average amateur photographer. Keep your phone protected by purchasing a nice Otter case for it. I think that at least

8-10 planters in my camps destroy their phones each season. You may even want to buy and use a cheap temporary phone (a “\$199 special”) for the summer, just so you don’t destroy your good high-end phone while you’re in the bush.

### Water Jug (not optional)

You definitely need something that lets you bring lots of water to the block. You should be drinking a minimum of 4 litres per day, even on cold and wet days. On hot days, many planters go through 8-12 litres in a single day. While you don’t need a fancy insulated water jug, you do need something that’s durable. Many planters use empty 4-litre milk jugs from the kitchen. These work fine, although they do puncture or break occasionally. If you want something that’s fairly indestructible and don’t care if your water warms up faster, get a couple of 3.78-litre cranberry juice jugs. Those things are almost indestructible.



**Figure 4.29**  
Insulated Water Jug.

*This water jug probably holds about ten litres, and is insulated to keep your water cooler on a hot day.*



**Figure 4.30**  
Budget Water Jug.

*If you want to save a bit of money, various types of discarded juice and milk jugs can function quite effectively.*

### Duct Tape

This is a special type of tape, usually a silvery-grey (although many other colours are now available). This tape is wide and sticky, and is exactly the right kind of tape to be useful to planters for dozens of reasons. Duct tape is a good general purpose fix-it material. Just remember that it is spelled “duct” (as in air-conditioning ductwork), not “duck” (as in the bird). There are dozens of types of duct tape

available, and experienced planters can often tell you about the pros and cons of different brands. In my opinion, the brand that Home Hardware sells is one of the best, and as a bonus Home Hardware's brand comes in a variety of colours. It might cost an extra few dollars to get coloured duct tape from HH, but at least it will be easier to tell who owns the roll.

For many years, planters used to put duct tape onto their fingers for protection. That was before the widespread availability of thin, inexpensive gloves that were ideal for planting. Gloves are much better than duct tape. Save your duct tape for other uses.



**Figure 4.31**  
Rolls of Duct Tape.

*Although duct tape is traditionally a silver colour, Home Hardware sells some very nice rolls in a variety of colours. They're just the right amount of sticky for general use, and they're only a couple dollars more per roll more than silver duct tape. Not spelled "duck" tape.*

## Thoughts for Women

Here are a few additional items that women won't want to overlook:

- Don't worry about putting too much emphasis on bringing extensive makeup supplies. You may not want to wear it frequently (if at all). Natural beauty is accepted and encouraged. Remember that some people don't even shower for three or four days at a time.
- Bring tampons with applicators, baby wipes, and an over-the-counter yeast infection remedy. These are all vital resources in a dirty planting world.
- An over-the-counter bladder infection remedy is a wise precaution, as infections are a common nuisance in the bush.
- A Diva cup is a great option in the bush to eliminate waste from tampons. It can easily be cleaned lightly with baby wipes and water, and then cleaned thoroughly on days off.
- Since UTI's are an unfortunately common health problem, having a lot of underwear is recommended, especially if you opt not to go into town for laundry every day off.
- Sports bras are worth their weight in gold.
- See the extensive additional notes (below) pertaining to having your period while planting.

Finally, I asked my wonderful partner Dee if she had any other suggestions for this section. She advised, "Bring your heart, but keep it in your head. Especially post season."

## Periods & Planting

Getting your period while living in a planting camp can be inconvenient and stressful. If not handled properly, you can also run into health issues. However, there are a lot of ways to increase your comfort and sanitation. Here's some information about different options and personal preferences, gathered from members of the "Radical Silviculture" group on Facebook, and summarized by a group admin member.

If using tampons or pads is your preference, that's great. However, there are ways to make these products safer and more hygienic. A good way to do so is to prepare a "period kit" with tampons/pads, baby wipes, and latex gloves. When you're on the block, your hands will often be covered with dirt, pesticides, and herbicides. If you change a tampon on the block, you'll want to make sure that your hands are really clean. Some people prefer to put on latex gloves. A good option is to use compostable baby wipes and cardboard, or no-applicator tampons. This way, you can change your tampon at the back of your piece with more privacy, then bury the minimal compostable garbage. You can also carry a spare bottle of water that is used just for washing your hands before and after. However, baby wipes are probably the better option.

A lot of planters who work in camp settings have started to switch to menstrual cups such as the DivaCup or LunaCup. When used properly, these products can make your life a lot easier. The cup helps to protect you for twelve hours at a time. This means that you don't have to worry much about changing tampons or pads during the day while working away from camp. Many planters love using these. You can insert the cup while you're still in camp in the morning, then change it after you come back to camp for dinner. You can clean it by using baby wipes or potable water in camp. A good approach is to take both potable water and baby wipes to the porta-potty, rinse the cup with water, then clean with a baby wipe. Make sure your hands are clean beforehand. Hopefully your camp has sanitizer stations at the outhouses. If you have to empty the cup during the day, use the same approach that you would if changing a tampon/pad. You can also pair your menstrual cup with period-proof underwear such as Thinx. This way, you almost never have to worry about leaking or dealing with anything period-related while on the block. Don't feel shy about asking your cook for boiling water in order to properly clean your cup (something you should do on a fairly regular basis). You can also buy "diva wash," which is a gentle fragrance-free soap that helps reduce the chance of infections. If a menstrual cup seems like something that you'd like to try, but you don't already use one, it is recommended that you buy one at least a month before the season starts to give yourself a chance to get used to it.

Some planters use reusable pads while planting, however, it doesn't seem to be a very popular option. Since you'll only have access to a washing machine once every four or five days, they aren't very practical. It can be a challenge to keep these products clean. If you're concerned about waste, then a menstrual cup is a better option.

Urinary Tract Infections (UTI's) are common for a lot of people. If you know that you're prone to getting them, there are some things you can do while planting to prevent them. Some triggers for UTI's are dehydration, damp clothing, not having TP on the block, not having access to a bathroom all the time, irregular showers, not showering before sex or urinating afterward, and using harsh soaps on sensitive body parts. Many planters bring an extra pair of dry underwear to the block, so they have an option for a change on rainy days. Try to avoid cotton as much as possible during the workday since cotton clothing doesn't dry as easily, and it holds moisture from rain/sweat longer than moisture-wicking synthetic underwear. However, changing into clean/dry, and loose-fitting cotton underwear and/or loose cotton pajamas after your end-of-day shower is a good idea, since these garments should be looser and more breathable than synthetics.

Another way to help prevent UTI's is to make sure that you always have toilet paper with you on the block. Since you won't have access to a bathroom for the entire day, it's important to bring TP with you. Carry it in a strong zip-lock bag, or perhaps two layers of plastic bagging, to keep it dry. It's prudent to back-bag some, and have a backup roll (protected in plastic) in your day-bag. Some planters who are prone to UTI's will take cranberry pills (or D-Mannose) as a preventative measure, and say that this is quite effective. All of these measures are also helpful to avoid yeast infections and bacterial vaginosis. If you're someone who gets yeast infections on a regular basis, a good preventative idea would be to bring something like Canesten (Clotrimazole). These products can soothe symptoms, which will help prevent you from missing work due to discomfort.

Ibuprofen is really helpful for easing cramps while planting. Having a hot water bottle in camp can also help ease cramps at night.

It's important for new planters to remember that planting will have a physical effect on your body. Intense physical exercise can result in altered flow schedules and lighter periods. It's also common for planters' cycles to sync up from living in a close community. New planters shouldn't be worried if they see changes in their periods. However, if you are concerned that your body doesn't feel normal during planting, you should visit a local clinic at the earliest opportunity.

Some crew leaders/supervisors have been known to buy and keep menstrual products stored discretely in their trucks, for planters in need. This is great, but it's not necessarily their responsibility to buy these products. One great idea is to ask your crew leader at the start of the season if they can provide a safe storage spot in the crew truck, then give them a couple of spare tampons or any other relevant items (carefully wrapped in plastic, with your name) to use as backup throughout the season. You (or a crewmate) could be very thankful for these emergency supplies some day! The first aid attendants in camp will absolutely be available in camp for any medical concerns, to drive you to the hospital for UTI treatment or any other serious concerns. Some issues cannot wait for a day off. If you have personal medical concerns that are not related to workplace injuries or illnesses, which don't require evaluation by a first aid attendant (remember that they are neither doctors nor gynecologists), you're not required to report or disclose information and you can simply request a ride to the local clinic. Also, remember that many walk-in clinics in small towns are

not open in the evenings or on weekends. If it's a day off and you think you might need to see a professional, don't wait until Day 1 to ask for a ride back into town. If you sense a problem developing, deal with it right away rather than waiting until your health deteriorates.

Search for the "Radical Silviculture" group on Facebook for additional information and advice.

For more photo and video resources associated with this chapter of the book, visit:

[www.replant.ca/training/campinggear](http://www.replant.ca/training/campinggear)