

Chapter 03 - “Camp Life & Other Lodging”

Many first-year planters, perhaps as many as ninety percent, will be working for companies that run tree planting bush camps in BC. I'm not sure if anyone knows how many separate planting camps operate in British Columbia every summer, but my estimate for 2026 is approximately sixty-five to seventy. That's based upon a discussion that we had on the Replant message board a few years ago, where we tried to compile a census list based upon input from the community, and adjusted for current market conditions and volumes. Camp sizes vary considerably, and sometimes two camps will merge during the season, or a camp will split into two, so it would be difficult to get accurate numbers. Regardless, if you're a first-time tree planter, there's a good chance that you will spend your summer in a tent. Possibly as much as 75% of the workforce in BC is based out of tent camps, and in Alberta and Ontario, it's even higher. In this section, we'll talk about the equipment and facilities that you might expect to find in a typical bush camp, and we'll also touch briefly on alternative lodging arrangements for jobs where a bush camp isn't practical.

Overview of Basic Structure

What's the point of a bush camp? Simple: To live closer to where you work. A lot of the blocks that we plant are quite far from town. It's not cheap for a company to set up a bush camp. Even though most companies charge daily camp costs, those fees don't even cover the basic costs of buying food and paying the kitchen staff, let alone the significant other expenses associated with setting up and maintaining a mobile tent camp (buying structures, maintaining and repairing equipment, fuel, propane, potable water, etc.). However, if the trucks don't have to drive as far to get to and from the blocks each day, the company saves some money on fuel & other vehicle costs to partially offset the costs of running the camp. The bottom line though is that the true advantage of camps is that they reduce driving time for planters. Planters make money when they're planting, not when they're sitting in a truck, and planting companies make money when planters are making money. If a camp is even just twenty minutes closer to the work sites compared to a motel, that means that each planter gets an extra 40 minutes each day on the block (assuming comparable portal-to-portal hours). If the camp is 45 minutes closer to the work sites than a motel, the planters get an extra 1.5 hours of planting time every day. That's a huge benefit. That's one of the reasons that motel-based companies often need to pay higher price: To make up for shorter production time on the blocks.

Most camps are organized as tent camps, although in a few camps, ATCO trailers are used on a slightly more permanent basis to house camp facilities or even to act as housing units for planters. However, ATCO Trailer camps are quite rare in the tree planting industry, and are not very mobile. Most planters will experience mobile bush camps where all facilities are either contained in tents, or in mobile trailers with wheels that can be moved to a new location behind a relatively small truck.



Figure 3.01
Semi-Permanent ATCO Camp.

Although some mobile tent camps may use an ATCO trailer for an office or other type of facility, these trailers are typically only used in semi-permanent camps which stay in one location for a year or even several years. This photo shows a long-term logging camp northwest of Mackenzie.



Figure 3.02
Some of the Main Structures in a Mobile Tent Camp.

The mess tent, shown here on the left, has windows that can be raised during good weather, to let more light and air into the eating area. In the background you can see a kitchen tent and a wooden walk-in cooler, used to store the food.



Figure 3.03
Tent City.

In some tent camps, planters are able to spread out through the woods or onto a large cut-block. In other places, especially if staying at a campground, space may be very limited.

The kitchen is often the heart of the camp. This is the domain of the cooks. Sometimes, the kitchen will be in a large mobile trailer, and at other times, a large tent will be set up. Either way, the kitchen will probably contain two or three stoves and ovens. These items are usually commercial units powered by propane rather than household ranges powered by electricity. There will be counters used for food preparation. There will be some storage space for basic cooking supplies, such as pots,

pans, trays, and utensils. There will be some shelving for food prep items, things like spices and baking supplies. There will be a fridge and a deep freeze, although those items might alternatively be located outside the kitchen. There needs to be a three-compartment sink for dishwashing, plus a hand-washing sink. The water supplied to the kitchen will be potable, and there will probably be a propane heater to ensure that both hot and cold water are available. Incidentally, planters should not expect to be allowed to just go in and use the stoves or other kitchen equipment when they feel like it. Always check with your cooks first, to ask permission, if you'd like to use kitchen equipment.



Figure 3.04
A Kitchen Trailer.

The kitchen trailer is the heart of the camp. I'm continually amazed at what the cooks can produce in this small space.



Figure 3.05
A Cook at Work in the Kitchen Trailer.

Here's a photo of a cook, hard at work inside the kitchen trailer.



Figure 3.06
Inside a Tent Kitchen.

Although a tent kitchen takes a bit longer to set up and tear down on a camp move, it provides the cook with a bit more space than a trailer. However, it's harder to keep clean, and rodent control is an issue.

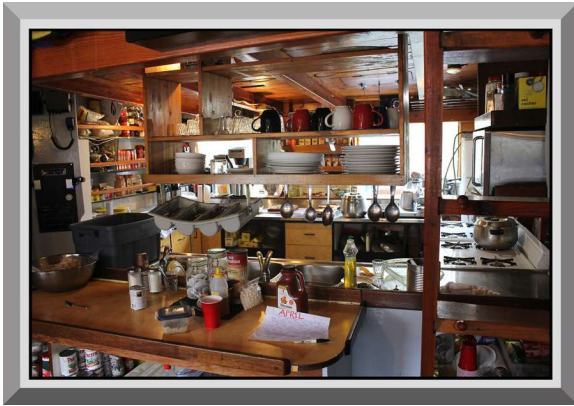


Figure 3.07
The Kitchen on a Barge.

This was the kitchen on the Lasqueti Daughters, a barge that was used for many years to house tree planters who were working on tree planting projects in remote inlets on the BC Coast. This barge sank during a project in 2015. None of the planters on board at the time were injured.

The mess tent is the main social area of the camp. The mess tent will contain tables and chairs for dozens of people. There will probably be a couple tables used for setting out lunch supplies each morning, so the planters can make their own lunches for the block. There may be another table with a charging station so people can charge phones and laptops. A generator outside the mess tent will supply power for the charging station and for lights hung within the tent. And finally, there will be a bulletin board which has dozens of publications that various government agencies mandate to be made available to all employees (things like camp standards, bear aware information, the silviculture workers' fact sheet, and other notices and pamphlets).



Figure 3.08
Inside the Mess Tent.

If the kitchen is the heart of the camp, the mess tent is the social center. On a night off, it might be cleared out and used for a dance party. On a quiet night off, you may see lots of planters playing board games.



Figure 3.09
The Camp Bulletin Board.

The bulletin board is important because companies (in BC) are legally obligated to post quite a bit of information on them, such as camp standards, the silviculture workers fact sheet, an emergency response plan, and much more. It's common for the tree prices to be posted here too.

There will be some sort of facility to allow planters to take a shower. The showers may not be very fancy! Usually, water is drawn from a non-potable source, such as a nearby stream or pond, then a gasoline-powered pump sends the water into the showers through a series of garden hoses. The water will be heated by a propane-powered water heater. In some camps, a professional shower trailer may be used, with anywhere from two to four shower stalls. In other camps, a mid-sized tent may be used, again with two to four separate shower sections, and the shower heads may be as simple as common gardening spray nozzles hanging from the roof. The important thing is that you must be provided with hot water and privacy.



Figure 3.10
The Shower Trailer.

Water for the showers is frequently non-potable, as the source is often a nearby stream or lake. The water gets fed into the water system by a pump of some sort, either gas-powered or running off electricity supplied by a generator. Water runs through a propane-powered hot water heater.

There will be a dry tent of some sort. This tent may be heated by any of several different methods. In the old days, planters would have air-tight wood stoves, and would need to gather kindling and firewood at each camp site. Various planters would be designated as responsible for keeping the fire hot after a rainy day. Nowadays, thankfully, it's more common to see propane blast heaters or large kerosene heaters. Propane is more common, although combustion of kerosene produces slightly less humidity. After a rainy day, if you enter the dry tent, you'll see dozens of jackets and other items of clothing hanging from a series of clotheslines within the tent, and hopefully, by morning, they'll all be dried out.

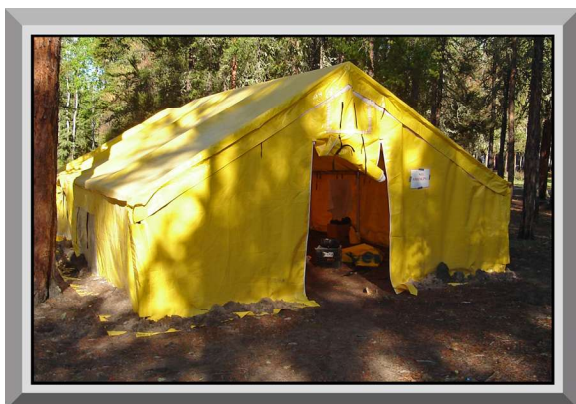


Figure 3.11
A Dry Tent Structure.

The dry tent often sits unused for long periods, but when it's needed, it's very important. After a rainy day, the dry tent will probably be completely full of wet clothing. With any luck, most of it will be relatively dry by the following morning.



Figure 3.12
Propane Powered Heater.

Various types of heaters can be useful in a dry tent. The key characteristic is that they need to be able to put out a lot of heat, quickly. For this reason, electrical heaters are useless. Typically, a propane heater of some type is the common solution.



Figure 3.13
Hanging Clothing & Boots to Dry.

A tree planter, hanging clothing to dry overnight.

There will also be a first aid tent or trailer. This facility will have a full set of supplies to meet basic emergency needs and treatment needs for any number of minor ailments. Provincial WorkSafe regulations dictate the contents of each first aid room. Planters should not be using supplies without the knowledge of a designated and trained first-aid attendant. These persons will treat you, notify the company about supplies that need to be replaced, and ensure that the proper paperwork and first aid records are filled out and submitted to their head office and WorkSafe BC. If a planter just grabs supplies without the first aid attendant knowing, inventory will not get replaced.

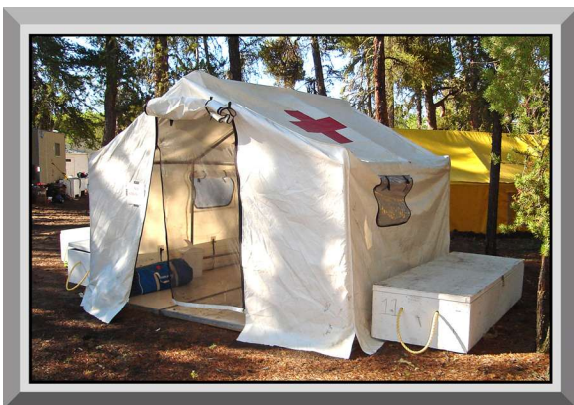


Figure 3.14
First Aid Tent.

This tent is dedicated to first aid. Not a lot of major first aid treatments are done in this type of facility. If the treatment is significant, the patient would likely be transported directly to medical aid. However, this tent is a convenient private location for minor treatments in the evenings.



Figure 3.15
First Aid Trailer.

Some companies will use trailers for their first aid facilities, instead of tents.



Figure 3.16
First Aid Supplies.

These cabinets are filled with all of the relevant first aid supplies as prescribed by WorkSafe requirements.

Finally, there will be several outhouses. Each outhouse should always have, at a minimum, a large bottle of liquid anti-septic hand wash solution or gel. Even better is a supply of hot running water outside the outhouses for handwashing, because proper handwashing is much more effective than hand sanitizer. The outhouses are generally dug at each location in high and dry ground, where water can't collect during a rainstorm, then filled in after camp is broken and ready to move to the next spot. Never set up your outhouses in a depression or low area! In some locations, port-a-potties are rented by the licensees responsible for the reforestation contracts, in which case a septic vacuum truck may visit the site once every several days to maintain the outhouses until the contract is over.

If you're using outhouses that get emptied by a septic truck, rather than just holes dug in the ground that get filled in by shovel after the camp moves, do not put ANYTHING other than human waste into the toilets. The hoses that the septic trucks use to pump out the shitters are not that much bigger than a normal household vacuum hose. Even something that seems benign such as an orange or an empty beer can, if thrown into the toilet, can plug up the hose on the septic truck. If that happens, your septic driver will probably abandon ship and drive away from the camp in anger, and you'll have to deal with ever-increasing piles of poo. Nobody wants to live in a world of shit. Keep a garbage can outside the outhouses for any garbage that should be collected. It is also helpful to have containers in the outhouses specifically intended to accommodate disposable menstrual care products.



Figure 3.17
Port-a-Potties.

These structures, also referred to as outhouses or shitters, contain the camp toilets.



Figure 3.18
Hand Sanitizer Dispensers.

The value of having plenty of hand sanitizer available in camp cannot be understated. I think that some companies hesitate to buy it, because they look at it as an unnecessary expense. However, as soon as the entire camp comes down with some sort of communicable flu, norovirus, or some other disease, production is decimated.

Incidentally, there are outhouses in camp, but not on the blocks. If you need such facilities in the middle of the day, you can't go back to camp. You'll need relieve yourself on the block, or in the woodline beside your piece. That's right, Mother Nature is your bathroom. And the best thing is, your bathroom has a new view every day, and always smells fresh. If you haven't done a lot of long-term camping before, and the thought of dropping your pants on the block makes you nervous, we have an online resource to give you some suggestions on how to take care of business without a toilet seat for assistance. However, a word of warning in advance: This link is NSFW, and if the thought of seeing Scooter's bare bum traumatizes you, you'll have to figure this stuff out on your own: www.replant.ca/pooping

The Daily Routine

A tree planting season starts for most people in late April or early May. April is all about cold mornings, freezing rain (or snow), and lots of enthusiasm. By late May, however, things are heating up, light misty rains are welcome, and after thirty days of planting, most people are starting to talk about time off. Most planting camps work for three or four days, then have one day off, in a cycle called "three and one's" or "four and one's." You'll probably also have four or five days off each month due to unexpected downtime from vehicle hassles, frozen trees, fog days while using helicopters, or snowstorms, or from planned downtime between contracts when moving camp. When this happens, don't complain. Take advantage of the downtime to get some rest. At other

times during the busy parts of the season, you'll wish you had more free time. The trick is to bite the bullet and take advantage of planting when it's available. Incidentally, it's often traditional in BC to have a forced week or so off around mid-June, due to the gap between some spring and summer contracts.



Figure 3.19

Be Prepared for the Unexpected.

It's common in early May to be surprised by a spring snowstorm. Falling snow is generally not a problem, and planters will continue working. However, once there's much more than an inch or so on the ground, it becomes difficult to see the best spots to plant the trees, and quality suffers.



Figure 3.20

Weather in the Mountains is Unpredictable.

Don't be shocked if you occasionally see snow in June. Or July. Or August.

On a typical day, you'll wake up between 5am and 6am, get dressed, and stumble into the mess tent. A huge breakfast awaits you, which you'll have difficulty forcing down. Breakfast is a critical meal! Although some planters will want to skip this meal, the energy you get from a strong breakfast will be critical in ensuring a productive day. After you've finished eating, you'll make your lunch from materials provided by the cook: Sandwiches, granola, cookies, juice, fruit, vegetables, trail mix, and other items. Smart planters get up early to get the best selection for their lunches. After breakfast, you'll go to your crew truck, make sure your planting gear is loaded, and head off to the block.



Figure 3.21
The Lunch Table.

The lunch table gets set up every morning before breakfast, then cleared away as soon as the planters leave camp. Planters make their own lunches, so they get to pick what they want to eat. The lunch table might be set up in the mess tent, or possibly in a separate tent.

Once you get to the block, you'll grab your planting gear and day-bag, and be directed to your piece. Mornings are usually cold. On the block, you'll have to get out of a warm vehicle, and bag up with wet trees that you've packed into a heavy set of planting bags. On a nice day, the sun will soon come out, and the temperature will start to warm up. Keep your head down, and keep planting. If the planting goes well, you'll be happy. If your land is bad, you'll become frustrated or unhappy, but you should realize that a certain amount of bad land is inevitable. The crew leader will hopefully try to distribute the good and bad land evenly, or at least, if someone gets obvious preferential treatment for a day or so, there will be an obvious reason for it, and the advantage will shift to other members of the crew a day or so later.



Figure 3.22
Walking Into a New Block in the Morning.

In BC, trucks can usually drive right to the edge of the blocks. In Alberta, Ontario, and elsewhere, walk-ins are a lot more common.



Figure 3.23
Easy Land.

This block is low-priced, because it is quite creamy.



Figure 3.24
Difficult Land.

This piece looks more challenging, so the price is probably higher. Remember that a “high” price or a “low” price means absolutely nothing without understanding the context of how difficult the block is.

Bad weather, bugs, steep blocks, slash, and other challenges may affect you, but remember, there's always beauty everywhere, even though you may not have much time to look around. At the end of the day, everyone puts their equipment away, and you grab your day-bag and head back to the trucks. Everybody stinks of sweat and the truck is generally filthy, yet people are happy. Even if you've had a bad day, at least it's over. You give your crew leader your numbers for the day, and you'll probably fall asleep on the way back to camp. Once you've started to drive home, put planting out of your head. If you can try not to think about it again until you arrive back on the block the next morning, you'll enjoy your summer more. When you get back to camp, you'll wash up, then eat a huge meal. For many planters, this is the best part of each day.



Figure 3.25
Exhausted on the Drive Home.

You will almost certainly be wiped out after a day of planting. Some people find it easy to sleep on the drive back to camp. This is great, because it increases the amount of rest that you get throughout your season.



Figure 3.26
Enjoying Dinner.

Many planters spend their entire day dreaming about what they'll be eating for dinner.

After dinner, it's all up to you. Some people head straight to the showers. Guitars may appear in the mess tent, emails may get written, and there's lots of conversation. The smart planters will head to bed well before nine o'clock, to get a good rest for a productive day starting the next morning.



Figure 3.27
Relaxing After Dinner.

After dinner, your first priority should be to start preparing for the next morning. Fill your water, and deal with any equipment repairs. After that, you'll want to go to sleep fairly early, but it's nice to be able to relax for an hour or so, just to keep your mind off planting.

On the “night off,” which refers to the night *before* the full day off rather than the actual evening of the day off, you'll stop planting anywhere between noon and 5pm. This usually depends on the state of the block you're on, the distance from camp to town, and crew dynamics. I've always told planters in my own camp that on the last day of a shift, we always work a full day. That extra half day of production on every third day of work leads to a 16.7% increase in productivity and earnings. Quitting at noon on the last day of the shift made more sense a couple decades ago when the shifts were always six or seven days long, but with much shorter shifts right now, you need to maximize your planting hours for each day that you're on the blocks. Anyway, when you're done work, you'll go back to camp and have dinner. If you're going to town right away, instead of waiting until the following morning, you'll need to hustle to grab your laundry and clean clothes. Town has a laundromat, restaurant, liquor store, bar, and hotel. Most crews stay in camp on the night before the day off, and wait until the next morning to make the trip into town, so they don't have to pay for motels.



Figure 3.28
Campfire on the Night Off.

When the weather cooperates, it's great to be able to relax around a campfire on a night off. You'll probably discover that there are some very talented musicians in your camp.



Figure 3.29
Theme Night Parties on the Night Off.

Sometimes, the camp will have an organized theme night party on a night off.



Figure 3.30
Board Games in the Mess Tent.

Many hours have been spent relaxing with beer and Settlers of Catan.

It used to be that the stereotypical routine for many planters was to drink as much alcohol as quickly as possible, then to act like a fool, including vomiting, getting kicked out of bars, getting beaten up by local red-necks, or getting arrested. However, times have definitely changed, and this is not the norm anymore. Nowadays, many Interior planters realize that they only work for about fifty to sixty days per year, and they need to make the most of this time, so they get as much rest as possible on days off. A lot of planters go to bed early on the night off, because the focus for their summer is on working, rather than partying. If you minimize your partying during the season, not only will you increase your planting earnings, but you'll have more of those earnings to spend in the winter while at school or travelling. No matter what your preference is, you'll spend the day off doing your laundry and running around town, picking up supplies.

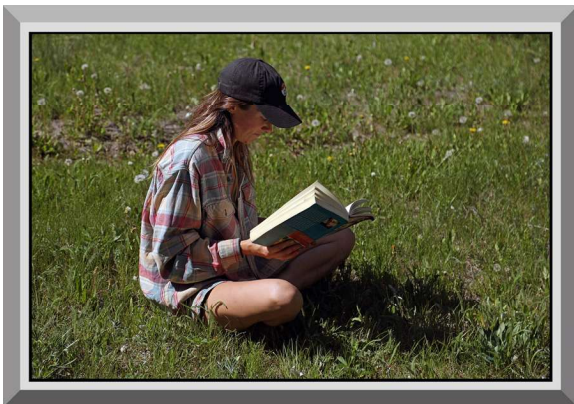


Figure 3.31
Relaxing on a Day Off.

Planter who go to town usually focus first on getting breakfast, then getting their laundry started. After that, they'll probably grab more food, then maybe spend part of the afternoon sleeping or reading in a park, or heading to the local Rec Center to jump in a pool.



Figure 3.32
Relaxing in Camp.

Going to town on the day off can be an exhausting experience. Some people prefer to stay in camp, so long as they have an option for food (the kitchen staff will also be on a day off though). Spending a day in camp can give you more energy for the upcoming shift.

Planting feels like different things to different people. I personally find that I completely zone out, except for paying some attention to the process of planting. Once I've bagged up and planted the first bundle or so, it usually feels like I'm bagging out about two minutes later. Some people find planting to be an exciting, competitive kind of racing activity. Others find planting to be frustrating, boring, or physically exhausting. No matter how you look at it, it gets easier every year.

Tree planting teaches you to be patient. A common slogan heard around camps is, "Hurry Up and Wait." This refers to the fact that logistics are important when dealing with a complex organization like operating a tree camp. It's important for people to be on time, because others depend on you. However, at the same time, it is common for unexpected hiccups to prevent everything from going as planned, so even after you get ready for something, you may end up sitting around for a while unexpectedly. Be patient.

Your Cooks and Meals

Obviously, with several dozen people needing to eat large breakfasts, lunches, and dinners, it wouldn't make sense to have an open kitchen where everybody prepares their own food. That would be chaos, and would also cause all kinds of food safety problems. It's much more cost-efficient and time-efficient to have staff devoted specifically to food preparation and service, and it also helps to do a better job of ensuring that planters have access to a balanced, nutritious diet.

Some camps have a single cook, although I've rarely seen this situation if there are more than 25-30 people working out of the camp. More frequently, there are a pair of cooks. Sometimes, they're equivalent in seniority, but more often, one is designated as a head cook and the other is designated as an assistant. In some of the largest camps, it's even possible to have a head cook with two assistants, although this isn't common.



Figure 3.33
A Cook Working on Dinner.

The cook either makes or breaks the camp. There is nothing better than a tasty meal at the end of a tough day to help forget about how hard the work is.



Figure 3.34
Taco Night.

Tacos are one example of a crowd favorite, especially at the end of a hot, sunny day.

What you eat depends mostly on your cook. I've seen camps where more than a third of the planters were vegetarian or vegans. Because of this, most planting companies now offer vegetarian and vegan food, and cooks are able to provide tasty vegetarian and vegan meals that still contain lots of protein. During your job interview, you will probably be asked if you should be listed as omnivore (everything), vegetarian, or vegan.

If your diet is more restricted, or if you have severe allergies to any types of food, you absolutely need to discuss this with your potential employer before accepting a job. If you don't, you might end up showing up for work in the woods only to find that the kitchen is not willing or able to accommodate your special diet. There is no requirement for cooks to prepare special meals for individual employees. A cook making dinner for fifty to sixty other people probably doesn't have the resources to devote to a special gluten-free dish for one person. Gluten-free diets (a dietary standard) are VERY hard for cooks to accommodate. It's far better to inquire about a non-standard dietary requirement in advance, and if necessary, seek alternative employment, rather than show up to discover that you're in a "take it or leave it" situation for your meals.

Having followed numerous conversations on the tree planting cook forums, I've read discussions where cooks have talked in great lengths about various minor challenges relating to standard variations such as vegan diets. But the two situations that unquestionably cause the most intense challenges for camp cooks are planters who are celiac (a medical condition) and planters with anaphylactic allergies. As many cooks have pointed out, it is essentially impossible to avoid cross-contamination in the limited space and challenging environments found in mobile camp kitchens, for

both of these conditions. If you are a celiac or have any type of severe food allergy, then at the very least, make sure you bring this up before you accept a job working in a remote camp. The best option, however, is to limit your job search to contracts and companies where you would be working out of motels. The best way of making certain of your own safety and being able to enjoy a diet that is perfect for yourself is to have complete control over your own destiny. That means preparing your own meals, in your own space.



Figure 3.35

Kitchen Facilities, Ovens and Range Tops.

It's amazing that a cook can feed sixty hungry planters (who eat as much food as about 150 normal people) using this equipment.



Figure 3.36

Amazing Dinners.

With any luck, your company will hire skilled cooks and give them an ample food budget to allow for some amazing meals.

If you have allergies to anything, tell the cook up-front, prior to the start of the season. If you only have certain preferences, such as not preferring mushrooms or onions, it would be selfish to expect a cook to make meals without those ingredients, as the rest of the camp would also suffer. But don't worry, there are usually lots of choices at each meal, so you should be able to work around your preferences without limiting the diet for others in the camp.

Planters are the key component in the generation of revenue for a planting company, and planters need to eat unbelievable amounts of food to remain productive. Most companies are very aware of this. No matter what else happens, you should get lots of food, and it should be healthy food. If you don't, there's a *very* serious problem with the cook or the company, and you should let your camp manager or the company owner know immediately. Any camp/company that doesn't feed its planters properly is guilty of serious mismanagement, and planters should immediately seek work elsewhere.

If the food lacks variety, or if you'd enjoy something that hasn't been on the menu, ask the cook about it. Usually there are very valid reasons why an experienced cook will stay away from certain dishes, but occasionally it's just a lack of awareness that there would be an interest. Remember that most cooks take enormous pride in what they do. If you have specific suggestions for more variety, talk to the cooks directly rather than just complaining to other planters on the block. Of course, some types of meals are just impossible from a logistical point of view. Think about what it would be like to have to have fifty friends over and try to cook them breakfast, in a kitchen that isn't much larger than you'd find in a typical house. Then get the mess completely cleaned up, have a nap for a few hours, and do the same thing again for dinner.

You're charged for camp costs, which are generally \$25 plus GST per day. This money covers part of the expenses for your meals, the cooks' wages, the use of facilities such as showers, and transportation to the work site and to town. In BC, legislation prohibits the employer from charging more than \$25 plus GST per day for camp costs, when in a bush camp situation. No such legislation exists in Alberta, so camp costs are generally higher in that province. For a crew working out of motels, if the employer has arranged for your room and pays for it up front, the \$25 per day limit is not applicable, and the company is allowed to charge you any amount up to the actual cost of the room.

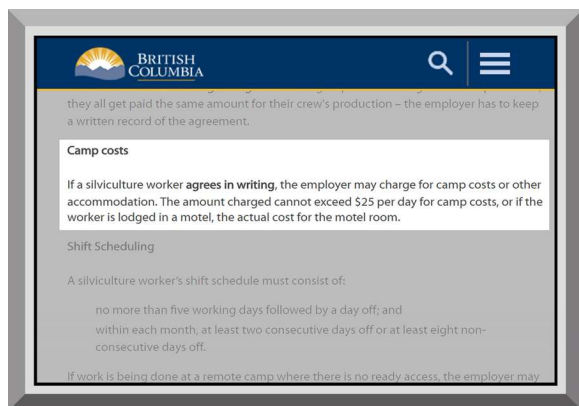


Figure 3.37
Camp Costs.

Not all companies charge camp costs. However, if they do, those camp costs are capped at \$25 per day plus GST when working in BC. In other provinces, there are no caps.

Source: BC Government.

Some planters wonder why the company charges you to work for them. It's a complex situation. It would certainly be possible for companies not to charge camp costs, and just pay the planters a slightly lower price per tree. If they did things that way, the net result to the company could be exactly the same. A company could just figure out the reduction in tree prices that would be needed to exactly offset the loss of revenue from collecting camp costs. However, if they did that, the most experienced planters would end up shouldering a greater portion of the costs of operating the camp. Let me use a detailed example so this makes more sense.

Let's assume that the average planter at a specific company plants 2500 trees per day, and the camp costs are \$25. The company would therefore need to reduce the price per tree by one cent across the board if they wanted to eliminate camp costs. On average, each planter would make \$25.00 less from their planting each day, because they're getting a cent less on each of their trees. But if they didn't have to pay \$25.00 in camp costs, then there wouldn't be any difference in the end, right? Well, the

problem is that this is based on average production. The fastest planters would be losing a cent per tree on larger tree numbers. So a good planter who planted 4000 trees in a day would effectively be losing \$40.00 from their paycheque in return for not paying the \$25.00 in camp costs, whereas a slow planter who plants 1500 in a day would only lose \$15.00 from their paycheque. This doesn't seem fair, since the two planters probably eat roughly the same amount of food. The fastest planters are the most valuable employees, so a company wouldn't want to penalize them disproportionately. With the current system of charging camp costs, each employee pays exactly the same amount per day.

Please note that in the fall of 2018, the industry was engaged in a lively debate about the pros and cons associated with retaining the long-standing camp cost system. The debate essentially centered around a contrast between a socialist and a capitalist approach, or choosing a structure that favored vets vs one that favored less experienced planters. Maintaining the status quo would be the best system for retention and made the most economic sense for the best planters, whereas eliminating camp costs would be the best decision with respect to improving recruitment and improving psychological satisfaction. Should every planter be expected to pay exactly the same amount for the meals and amenities provided in bush camps? Or should high production planters be expected to contribute a greater share? Almost every large company (with the exception of NGR and Artisan) decided that it would be fairer for every planter to pay the same amount rather than penalizing the best planters, so they left the implementation of their camp cost systems untouched. NGR eliminated camp costs, but then reinstated camp costs a few years later.

For a more comprehensive examination of the history and rationale behind camp costs, visit: www.replant.ca/campcosts

Other Equipment

I've already mentioned the basic structures that you'll find in a planting camp, things like the kitchen, the mess tent, the dry tent, the first aid tent, the showers, and the outhouses. But there will be many other pieces of equipment that you might also run into. I'll try to describe each of them briefly, so you have a better mental picture of how complex a mobile tent camp can be.

Earlier I mentioned that there would probably be a refrigerator, or a couple fridges, either inside the kitchen or just outside the kitchen. A much better alternative that I use is a complete walk-in cooler structure. This small insulated structure will probably be about eight feet per side, and will have a cooling unit installed, plus lots of shelving. A walk-in cooler can handle the volumes of food required for a mid-sized planting camp much more easily than a couple of fridges can.

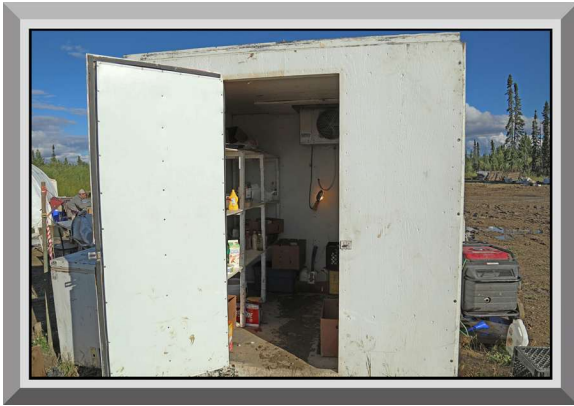


Figure 3.38
A Walk-In Cooler, for Food Storage.

This structure can be erected in just about an hour. It's 8 feet on each side, and fully refrigerated, so it can keep a large quantity of food at the correct temperature to meet Food Safe regulations. Refrigerated food must be stored at between zero and four degrees Celsius.



Figure 3.39
Shelving Inside the Walk-In Cooler.

There's much, much more space inside a walk-in than there is in a couple of refrigerators. This one looks like it has a fair amount of food.



Figure 3.40
Deep-Freezes, for Frozen Foods.

For frozen storage, the best option is to use a couple of deep-freezes. Freezers need to keep food frozen at a temperature of -18°C or lower.

For a water supply, it was common in the old days to have half a dozen 40-gallon water barrels in each camp to supply safe potable water, and empty barrels would get re-filled in town from a garden hose at a gas station. Thankfully, most professional planting contractors now use a couple of large water reservoirs, perhaps of around a thousand gallons each, and have potable water trucked in. This is more time-efficient and ultimately more cost-efficient (despite the price tag on each water delivery). And let's be honest – the water that came from garden hoses at random gas stations probably wasn't always safe.



Figure 3.41
Water Reservoirs.

These reservoirs typically get filled approximately once per shift by a professional water truck that comes from town.



Figure 3.42
A Water Tap.

There will be one (or more) water taps in camp, and those taps will only be connected to safe, potable water. These taps allow planters to fill their water bottles.

In some remote locations, where it's difficult to have water trucked in, a company will use a professional water filtration system. Water will be pumped out of a stream and run through the filtration system into a reservoir for the kitchen. The filtration system will ensure that the water passes through a series of perhaps three filters of decreasing size, to filter out large debris and then smaller debris and then really fine sediments, although these filters don't necessarily make the water look clear. The water then goes through some sort of chemical or ultraviolet filtration stage which eliminates all biological contaminants and ensures that the water, even if discoloured, is safe to drink. The only problem with these systems is that they're difficult to keep running, and if they're not set up and maintained correctly, there's a risk that the water doesn't get filtered properly and people could become sick. It's impossible to assess whether or not such a system is functioning properly and the water is actually potable with just a visual inspection.

There's usually a fuel depot in camp, also called a fuel cache. This will probably be built in an area where sheets of plastic or containment flooring can keep any spilled fuel from leaking into the soil, and they'll be surrounded by a protective ditch and berm. The ditch is a backup protective measure to contain any potential spill. The berm helps protect the fuel cache from getting run into by a truck. If the cache is in an area where a vehicle could conceivably back into it, a crew might also place logs around it to serve as another barrier. This kind of a protective measure is called "bump logs."



Figure 3.43
Bump Logs Around a Fuel Cache.

Heavy logs and snow fencing around the fuel cache significantly reduces the risk that a truck accidentally drives into the cache. Fencing (or yellow signboards) provide a strong visual deterrent, and even if a truck doesn't notice the cache, the wheels will hit the logs.



Figure 3.44
Fuel Supplies in the Fuel Cache.

Any fuel or other hazardous material in the fuel cache needs to be labelled properly. The TDG number for diesel is 1202, and for gasoline is 1203. Yellow jerry cans should only ever contain diesel, and red jerry cans should only ever contain gasoline. The blue jerry has kerosene.

There will probably be poles erected around the fuel cache with bright orange snow fencing or flagging tape, to help visually identify the danger. The cache will probably contain barrels of diesel and gasoline, plus jerry cans, smaller containers of things like kerosene, and items like motor oil. Many camps also have one or two large fuel containers called tidy tanks (or slip tanks) mounted in the back of pickups. These are easy to fill and very efficient for dispensing fuel to other vehicles. Don't allow people to smoke around the fuel cache, or around trucks with tidy-tanks. Make sure that the tidy tanks are properly grounded before use.



Figure 3.45
Don't Smoke Near the Fuel Cache!

It should go without saying, but it's important that people don't smoke in or around the fuel cache.

A dish pit will need to be dug behind the kitchen. This is where the "gray water" goes. Gray water is the run-off after washing dishes, so it's basically a mix of liquid wastes with no human waste. This pit will be dug several feet deep and several feet wide. It gets covered up with a few sheets of

plywood, and then gets fenced off with high-visibility flagging tape, as a safety precaution. You wouldn't want to fall into this pit! Unfortunately, the dish pit is sometimes an attractant for bears, so I usually put a generator close to it as a possible deterrent. Many camps will also require a gray-water pit for shower run-off. The terms “black water” and “night soil” refer to human waste and fecal matter, and are handled separately from any gray water pits.



Figure 3.46
The Gray-Water Pit.

This pit is used to contain the run-off from the kitchen and from washing dishes. The snow fencing is to prevent someone from accidentally stumbling into it. Some people call this the “dish pit,” but it’s a gray-water pit, not a dish-washing pit.



Figure 3.47
The Dish Pit.

This is the real dish pit, the place where everyone washes their dishes after dinner. It’s important not to leave dirty dishes around camp, because they can attract bears and other problem animals.



Figure 3.48
Three-Compartment Sink System.

It’s common across Canada for camps to be required to have at minimum a “three compartment sink” system. One is for washing, one is for disinfecting, and one is for rinsing. This meets international Food Safety requirements.

Your camp will need garbage cans. Often, a camp will have several traditional garbage cans scattered throughout the mess tent and surrounding areas. These will be emptied out by the cooks each morning after breakfast, and again in the evening after dinner. The camp may have some temporary bear-proof garbage containers, which are used on an interim basis until the garbage bags can be moved to a garbage trailer. The garbage trailer should be enclosed, rodent-proof, and bear-

proof, and needs to be taken to a landfill to be emptied at the end of every shift, before the garbage really starts to rot and crawl with maggots.



Figure 3.49
Bear-Proof Garbage Cans.

These garbage cans are quite helpful in reducing the issue of animals getting into garbage and spreading a mess all over camp. It's not just bears that you have to worry about. Foxes, crows, mice, and dogs are also big problems.



Figure 3.50
The Garbage Trailer.

This trailer is designed to be rodent-proof and bear-proof. In addition, it's a smart idea to park it a few hundred meters away from the rest of camp, because the smell will probably still attract some hungry bears.

Your camp will probably have a number of VHF mobile radios. Every truck should have one. The kitchen should have one. And finally, most crew leaders and checkers and supervisors will carry handheld VHF radios that communicate on the same system. I've also seen some situations where a crew leader will buy several small programmable two-way VHF radios from Amazon and always have one of these radios in a waterproof container at each cache, besides carrying another on their radio harness beside their VHF handheld. This way, if a planter comes back to a cache and needs anything, they can always contact the crew leader quite quickly. These radios are also great if there's a first aid problem, and the crew leader needs to be alerted very quickly. It wouldn't completely surprise me if there came a day eventually when every planter was required to carry a small radio with them on the block. This would also be an improvement to current communications between crew members. The only headache would be to keep them all charged every day.



Figure 3.51
VHF Radio in the Kitchen.

This radio sometimes lets the cooks talk to the crews, if the blocks are relatively close to camp. The VHF radio might also come in handy during an emergency, as the cooks would be able to talk to traffic on nearby logging roads.



Figure 3.52
Crew Leader Communicating with VHF Handheld Radio.

Taking advantage of communications devices is the first step to improving efficiency of operations. Here we see a crew leader talking to a helicopter on a VHF handheld radio.



Figure 3.53
Chinese-Manufactured VHF Handhelds.

These radios aren't really waterproof, but they're about one eighth the cost of a professional weather-resistant VHF handheld, and when paired with a small Pelican case to keep them clean and dry, they can be handy for a crew that wants to provide radios at planters' caches.

For people who use cheap offshore handhelds, they're not recommended for use on logging roads due to limited range and questionable status with the ISED (formerly Industry Canada).

If the camp is located on a logging road, "camp ahead" signs should be posted a few hundred meters away from the entrance to camp, in both directions. These signs can warn road users to slow down in case there are vehicles entering or exiting the camp.



Figure 3.54
Crew Ahead & Camp Ahead Signs.

There should be a "Crew Ahead" sign a few hundred meters before the start of any block that planters are working on. There should also be a "Camp Ahead" sign a few hundred meters before the camp, to warn drivers to slow down.

The camp will probably have three or four gasoline-powered generators, each capable of generating perhaps three thousand watts. Sometimes, a camp will have a much larger diesel-powered generator instead, that can generate in excess of ten or twelve thousand watts. Generators are used to power the kitchen, electric pressure pumps (for water), the supervisor's office, lights in the mess tent and other structures, and to charge the batteries for the handheld radios. Some companies even use propane powered generators. No matter whether you're using gasoline or diesel generators, only a limited number of people should be allowed to refuel this equipment, and they should be thoroughly trained in fuel-handling procedures to ensure that the wrong type of fuel is never added to any pump or generator. If you put diesel into a gasoline powered engine, you'll need to drain the fuel and there might be minor damage. If you put gasoline into a diesel-powered engine, you could easily destroy the engine.



Figure 3.55
Charging Station for Laptops & Cell Phones.

It seems like there are never enough extension cords and power bars to keep everyone happy. This charging area looks chaotic, and should be tidied up somehow.



Figure 3.56
Gasoline-Powered Generator.

Each mobile tent camp will probably have several small gas generators, such as this 3000w model, or a couple of larger generators, maybe in the 7000w range. These generators supply electricity to all of the company-owned structures in camp. Planters do not get power supplies in their tents.

Most modern camps have a satellite internet system, used for an internet connection in camp. Just don't make the mistake of setting the camp up in such a position that trees or a cliff blocks the satellite signal (this is much less of a problem with Starlink than it was with XploreNet). Most camps will run the internet into a wireless router that gets set up in the kitchen or mess tent or some central area, so everyone can access the internet from their laptops if they're in the immediate area of the router. Satellite internet systems are typically quite a bit slower than the broadband that you're accustomed to on a residential connection. Couple this with the fact that there may be a dozen or more people trying to use it at any given time, and you'll quickly get really frustrated with the internet speed. It's a wise idea for the entire camp to have a rule saying that people aren't allowed to run torrents or watch video on the shared internet, because it really makes the internet connection quite useless for all other users. In other words, assume that the connection will be suitable for reading emails or viewing sites with mostly text content, but not much else. In areas where there's decent mobile network coverage, the internet problems are often alleviated because a lot of planters will just use their phone to go online, or to create a private hotspot for their own laptop. But don't count on this either, as a lot of camps are set up well outside the range of typical mobile coverage areas.

Canada's original rural satellite solution was Xplornet. Unfortunately, that system is very slow in comparison to today's broadband standards, and is bandwidth-capped. The Starlink system was a significant improvement starting when it became available in the early 2020's, although it is [at the time of writing] now bandwidth-capped again, which doesn't work when a camp of several dozen people are trying to use it frequently. The industry continues to await competitive alternatives to Starlink, which should become more widely available in the next few years. Networks that may look promising include Canada's Telesat, Europe's Eutelsat/OneWeb, and Amazon's Leo (formerly Kuiper). At the moment, Leo looks like the only service that will probably target residential and light commercial users such as tree planting camps, but that could change. Leo may be available starting as early as mid-2026, so basically, in time for the 2027 planting season.

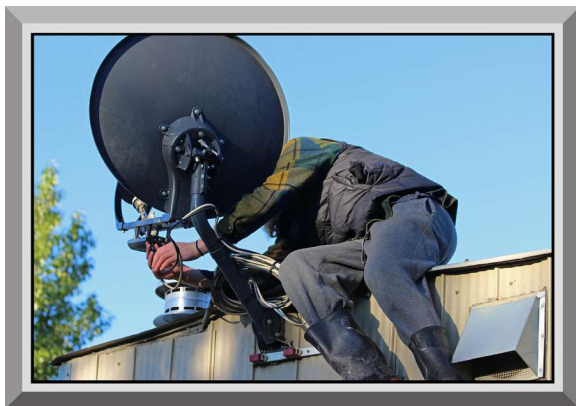


Figure 3.57
Satellite Dish, for Remote Internet.

Many camps have a satellite internet system in place, so camp management can communicate daily production to clients. Planters are generally allowed to use this system. However, to be clear, it is extremely slow compared to what you're accustomed to at home.

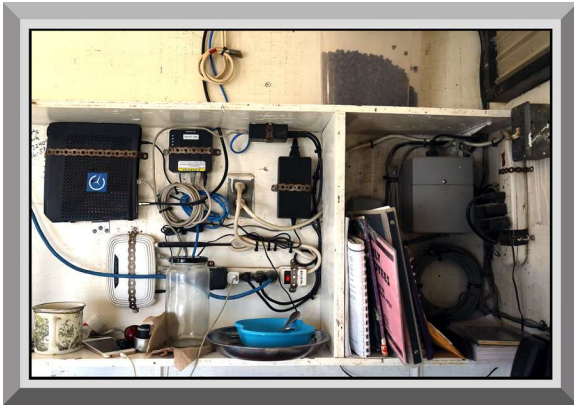


Figure 3.58
Routers In The Kitchen Trailer.

If there's a satellite system in place, it's typical to have a high-powered router in the kitchen or some sort of permanent trailer, which would allow people to pick up the WiFi signal in the mess tent.

Speaking of mobile coverage, don't expect to have cell service deep in the bush. Sometimes you will, but many times you won't. Telus (and their low-cost subsidiary Koodo) and Bell have agreements to share each others' towers for roaming, and many planters find those providers to have the most reliable coverage. Rogers is usually ranked by planters as being inferior to Telus/Bell. Finally, some smaller third-party providers (often available in big cities like Toronto or Montreal) may not even work in remote areas of western Canada or northern Ontario. Keep in mind that Telus, Bell, and Rogers account for over 90% of total mobile customers in Canada. Cell coverage generally gets a bit better almost every year, but there are still a lot of dead zones throughout rural Canada. However, cell-over-satellite may change all of this very soon.

Starlink and AST SpaceMobile are now facilitating the option of satellite-based cell communications, which will be a massive improvement for remote resource industries. Rogers is partnered with Starlink, and currently offers SMS texting over satellite when outside of cell service. Data-heavy apps are being phased in (WhatsApp, Google Maps, etc.) and full native voice calls will be coming in the near future. You need a fairly high-end Samsung or Pixel device to make this work, with iPhone functionality (on high-end models) coming soon. Surprisingly, for non-Rogers customers, anyone can sign up for the Rogers Satellite service for \$15/month using an eSIM, even if their primary provider is Bell or Telus. We should see a number of people being able to use this service in the 2026 planting season, for the first time. AST SpaceMobile will soon be the satellite communications backbone for Bell and Telus customers. They tested their system successfully in New Brunswick in late 2025, and will be rolling out to all customers in mid-to-late 2026. AST offers much more robust service, currently able to handle full video calling compared to Starlink's current limited-bandwidth options. The bottom line is that we should have access to rudimentary capabilities during the 2026 planting season (with Starlink winning on availability and AST winning on bandwidth), but more much advanced and robust availability by the 2027 season. Koodo will allegedly get access to AST at the same time as Bell/Telus, probably as an add-on option.

Propane tanks are used to power a lot of different heating sources in camp. A large propane tank, which is about four feet high, is often called a "hundred-pounder." A large camp may have as many as a dozen or more of these, or it may have a single large propane tank capable of carrying several hundred litres, mounted on a mobile trailer. The propane is used mostly by the kitchen, to power the stoves and hot water heaters. Propane may be used for a smaller residential-type stove & range-top

that allows planters to make tea and coffee without imposing on the cooking facilities. Propane is also used for things like heaters for the shower facilities, and heaters in the dry tent. Propane tanks need to be labeled carefully as dangerous goods, and shouldn't ever be stored in such a manner that a vehicle could back over one. It's also wise to dig them into the ground and to tie them off to something solid, so there's no risk that they could tip over and hit the ground. Don't allow people to smoke around propane tanks.



Figure 3.59

“Hundred Pounder” Propane Tanks.

Propane provides energy for a lot of different uses in camp, including hot water for the kitchen and showers, and heaters in the dry tent. The tanks on the left side of this photo should be secured properly.



Figure 3.60

Propane Tanks Secured Firmly.

It's important to make sure that the propane tanks are secured firmly, so they don't fall or get knocked over. A severed propane line could result in an explosion. These tanks are dug into the ground, and very secure. Ratchet straps are a good alternative solution.

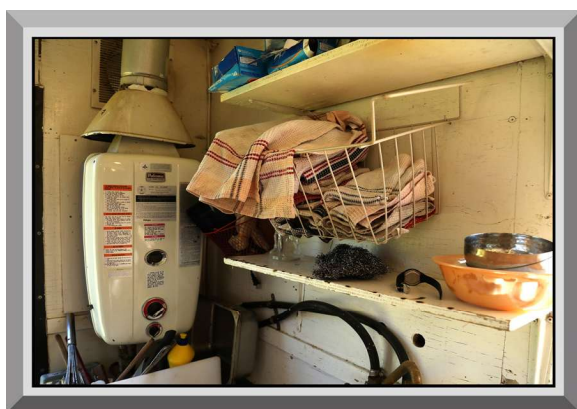


Figure 3.61

Hot Water Heater in the Kitchen.

The white device on the wall is called a “Paloma” heater. It uses propane to heat water flowing through the heater, which allows the kitchen and showers to have hot water on demand. The temperature can be regulated by controlling the speed at which the water flows.

Some camps have more than one reefer. A reefer, or refrigerated trailer, is often used to store as many as a thousand boxes of trees. Some camps also have smaller refrigerated trucks that can carry several hundred boxes. A full-sized reefer trailer is usually either 40-foot, 48-foot, or 53-foot length, and gets pulled by a standard large truck like a Freightliner tractor. This tractor has what's called a

“fifth wheel” to use for attaching the tractor to the trailer. When a reefer trailer doesn't have a refrigeration unit, it's called a dry trailer, but these aren't used as commonly by planting companies, because when it comes to tree storage, the trees need to be refrigerated. A tractor with a reefer or dry trailer attached is known as a tractor-trailer, or an eighteen-wheeler.



Figure 3.62
Reefer Trailer.

A “reefer” is a trailer with a refrigeration unit. If there is no refrigeration, it is called a “dry trailer.” Either way, it’s a great way of moving a camp around. Reefer trailers are also used very frequently to move large shipments of trees around.

The reason why a camp may have more than one reefer (or possibly a dry trailer) is because it's an efficient way to move a full camp around. Once the camp structures and equipment are disassembled, they take up a very large amount of space, and a reefer is sometimes barely large enough to store and move the entire camp. The driver of a tractor-trailer unit needs to have a special license known as a Class 1, so it's very rare that you'd see a planter or crew leader driving one around.

I want to return to generators and pumps for a moment, because confusion about their functions has always been a pet peeve of mine. Many people don't understand the distinction between the two, and frequently call them by the wrong names. They may both be “small red machines that use gas and are noisy,” but they have very different functions. Generators are used to “create” (or generate) electricity from fuels such as gasoline (most commonly), diesel, or propane. Technically, this is a conversion of energy, not creation, but you get the point. Electronic devices benefit when they are attached to generators. You can charge your phone or laptop with the output (electricity) from a generator.

Pumps, on the other hand, don't create anything. They move stuff, typically liquids such as water. Pumps can force water into the shower system, which lets you attempt to remove the mud and sweat that you're covered with (but they can't cleanse your dirty soul). If you direct the output of a pump at your phone or laptop, your day will end in sorrow with a waterlogged electronic device. So generators are good for cell phones, and pumps are bad for cell phones.



Figure 3.63
Water Trailer with Reservoir & Pump.

The large white bin in this trailer is a water reservoir. The red and white piece of equipment is a pump, which supplies water (from the reservoir) to the shower trailer. Pumps move water, and have hoses attached to them. In contrast, a generator “makes” electricity.

Moving Camp

There’s almost no chance that your bush camp will stay in the same location for the entire season. Typically, the camp will get set up in one area, planters will work there for 2-4 weeks, then once the trees on that contract have all been planted, the camp needs to move to a new location. If you’re at a camp-based company with a long season, it’s common to have 4-6 different camp locations during your spring/summer planting season. This means that the camp needs to be moved 4-6 times.

It’s hard to describe the process of moving a camp. The closest analogy that I can think of would be that it’s like moving a circus. It’s often a fairly chaotic process, as one might expect. The first camp setup of the season will be a slow process, and might take 3-4 hours to set up the main structures of the camp (ie. everything owned by your company). Planter should expect to get paid for this time, although it will probably be at minimum wage. After the camp is set up, planters are allowed to disperse to set up their personal tents and “move in.” You won’t get paid for the time spent working on your personal setup.

Camp teardown, before moving to a new location, is usually slightly faster than setup. After the crews have done a couple of setups and teardowns, it should be possible for everyone to set up a full camp in as little as 2.5 hours, when everyone works fast and works together. Tearing down and packing up a camp might happen in as little as 2 hours (not counting time spent afterwards on personal tents and belongings).

There always tends to be a LOT of garbage generated when a camp is torn down. If you have garbage to get rid of at your personal tenting area, it’s smart to try to do a pre-emptive cleanup a few days before the camp move. The camp supervisor will usually try to get rid of all possible garbage (to the local landfill) on the day before the camp move, because that means that the garbage trailer(s) should be empty at the start of the teardown process. There never seems to be enough room in the garbage trailer on a camp move.

Whenever you’re helping with a camp move, regardless of whether it’s a setup or a teardown, make sure you wear work boots and gloves. I can’t begin to count the number of people who have gotten

minor injuries to fingers or toes when people were rushing to move equipment around during a move. And on that note, “slow and steady wins the race.” Any time a group of people is working together to move something heavy, such as a stove or a freezer, everyone needs to agree on the strategy for that particular task, instead of just grabbing the equipment with a burst of reckless abandon.

When You're Not in a Tent Camp

Sometimes you may find yourself working in a logging camp. You stay in logging trailers, which usually come complete with one bed per room, hot showers and running water, laundry facilities, a heated mess hall, and television and/or internet access. The advantages are comfort, but sometimes at the expense of higher camp costs. Although BC has regulated camp costs, rates for staying in logging camps are very expensive. If a licensee is covering the costs of providing logging camp accommodations, then the tree planting contractor doesn't have to pass these costs along to planters. If the planting contractor is required to pay the logging camp operator for the room-nights, you'd better hope that your planting company bid high enough on the work to absorb that significant expense.



Figure 3.64
Bunkhouse Accommodations in a Semi-Permanent Remote Camp.

Semi-permanent camps are often used in the logging, mining, and oil&gas industries. It is rare that planters are lodged in these facilities, but they're usually a pleasant change. You're not allowed to wear hats in the meal areas.

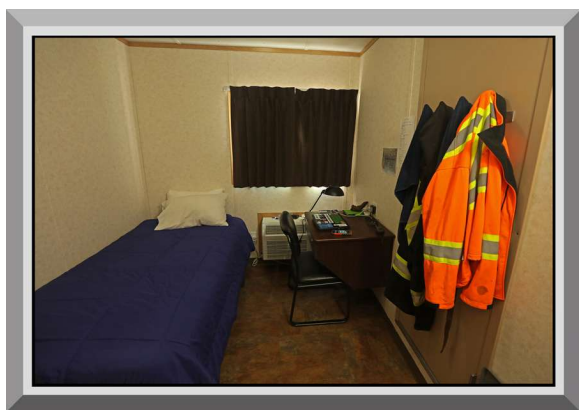


Figure 3.65
Camp Lodging.

The rooms in semi-permanent camps are usually small but cozy. There's a much more extensive series of photos from a semi-permanent oil&gas camp in the online link for this chapter.

You may also be working out of motel accommodations, or staying in guest cabins in wilderness resorts. In these situations, you're usually required to buy and cook your own food, or sometimes eat

in a nearby restaurant, depending on what arrangements the contractor has been able to work out. Depending on the size of the room, your roommates, and their habits and cooking skills, this can either be a great or a horrible experience.



Figure 3.66

Working With Motel Accommodations.

A clean bed and a hot private shower are two of the perks of working out of motels. If you don't mind cooking for yourself, motels are usually more comfortable than living in a tent.

If your planting company is arranging for the rooms and pays for them up-front, the maximum that they can charge to the planter is your share of the actual cost of the room. For example, if there are two people staying in the room, then the maximum you can be charged for camp costs is 50% of the cost of the room, plus the GST and provincial sales tax associated with that amount.



Figure 3.67

A Touch of Civilization.

Working out of a motel definitely seems more "civilized" than working in a mobile tent camp, although social interactions are greatly reduced when everyone has their own motel rooms. Mind you, that really appeals to some planters.

There's also a hidden component to camp costs for people working out of motels. You're almost always responsible for providing for your own food, so there's a cost of perhaps around \$25 or more per day to eat. If you're also paying \$25 for motel costs, your effective total living costs would therefore be around fifty dollars per day (motel plus food). That's one of several important things to compare when debating the pros and cons of living and working out of motels versus a bush camp (if you have a choice in the matter), since your food is included in the daily camp costs when working out of a tent camp. Also, when working out of motels, remember that you have to pay the motel costs for your room even on days off, whereas in a bush camp, you aren't charged camp costs on days off. Working out of motels is significantly more expensive than working out of bush camps.

Social life is typically much more active in camps. In motels, many people hide in their rooms all evening and go to bed early on a night off.

If the industry makes a broader move to eliminate camp costs and motel costs in 2027 or beyond (which seems quite unlikely as some companies started to re-instate them in 2024), then companies operating camps would still have a bit of a marketing advantage. They'd be able to advertise "free food," whereas people working out of motels would still have to purchase and prepare their own meals. It seems disingenuous for companies to advertise "free camp costs" if they neglect to mention that they don't feed their planters, so if you hear a company mentioning free camp costs, ask if they actually provide meals. Cooking for yourself is quite time-consuming and increasingly expensive.

For more insight into the pros and cons of tent camps versus motel shows, read the following post online: www.replant.ca/accommodations

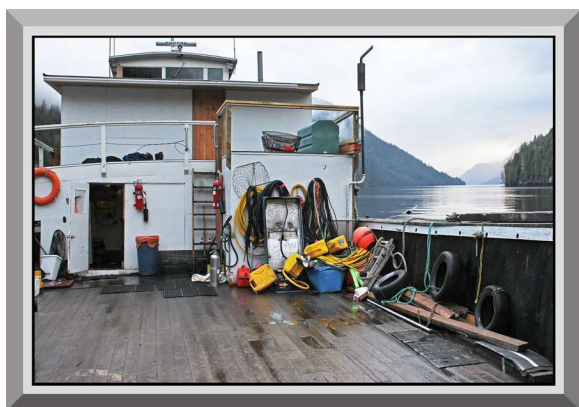


Figure 3.68

The Lasqueti Daughters, a Coastal Barge.

Although the Lasqueti Daughters sank in 2015, it's possible that you might end up living and eating on a barge someday, if you ever end up working on a coastal project.

Tips For Comfort

Here are a few hints for those of you who haven't done a lot of hardcore camping:

- It's good to carry a few empty heavy-duty "contractor size" garbage bags for when you're moving around. If you put one of these inside your duffle bag or hockey bag, and then pack all of your gear/clothing into the garbage bag and tie it, everything that you own is now "waterproof" and it doesn't matter if the duffle bag gets soaked in a rainstorm in the bed of an open-back pickup. Key tip: Keep the garbage bag on the inside of the duffle bag rather than the outside, so it isn't likely to become punctured, and so your belongings don't accidentally get thrown into the garbage trailer and taken to the landfill.
- Before setting your tent up, look carefully at the lay of the land. You may think that you've discovered the perfect spot, but will it still be perfect after four days of torrential rain and biblical flooding? High ground is best for tents, to avoid waking up in six inches of water.
- If the ground under your tent is uneven or has rocks and roots that will make your sleep uncomfortable, get a couple of empty flattened tree boxes, and lay them down on the ground under your tent.
- Having a large blue or green camping tarp over your tent, fastened securely with rope so it can't blow away in heavy windstorms, will help keep you and your belongings dry.

- Although this was already mentioned in the section about safety, don't keep food in your tent. Food in your tent significantly increases the chance that an animal will tear your tent apart to get at the food. It really sucks to come home after a hard day and find that your tent has been shredded by a hungry bear or coyote.
- Showers and swims are both very beneficial for comfort and regulation of internal temperature. After a really cold, wet day, a hot shower can warm you up faster than your metabolism can. On a hot day, a cool shower or a jump in a lake really helps to quickly get your core temperature down to a safer range. Follow up with a change into moderately clean clothing whenever possible.
- It really helps to have a flashlight, even if you plan to go to bed before dark. If you wake up and suddenly have to visit the outhouses in the middle of the night, and it's pitch black and the outhouses are a few hundred meters away through the woods, you have a problem if you don't have a flashlight. The light on your cell phone is also a working solution, although most people struggle to keep their cell charged, so they prefer to have a flashlight in their tent.
- Some planters like to keep a cheap air horn in their tent (compressed air horn, available from Canadian Tire). This can provide mental comfort in case they need to signal for assistance due to the presence of an animal or any other issue.



Figure 3.69
Bear Mace Station.

If a camp is working in an area that has a lot of bears, it might be smart to hang a few bear mace stations around camp, with a canister of bear mace in each, even though this is not required by any provincial regulations.



Figure 3.70
Mustering Point.

It's important for each camp to have a designated primary "mustering point," where everybody meets if there's an emergency in camp. You should also have a backup secondary mustering location.

I have a book of photos from a BC Interior tent camp operation, which might shed additional light on what to expect when living in a planting camp. For more information about that book, visit: www.replant.ca/riteofpassage

For more photo and video resources associated with this chapter of the book, including an extensive photo gallery from a permanent oil-field camp, visit:

www.replant.ca/training/camplife