Chapter 28 - "Coastal Planting"

So you want to be a coastal tree planter? You poor, misguided soul.

Coastal work is the "professional league" of tree planting. Everything about coastal planting is more challenging than planting anywhere else in Canada. The only good thing about the coast is the rainbows. There are lot of rainbows.

To clarify, the information in this chapter will not be of much use to many first-year planters. The average experience level on coastal crews is such that it is usually hard to find work with a coastal company unless you have at least five years of planting experience, at least a few of which must be in technically challenging ground in BC's Interior.

Figure 28.01
A "Typical" Coastal Block.

Expect far more slash, and steeper slopes than you find almost anywhere else in Canada. Also, expect a lot of rain, especially in the spring. Some years, during the spring coastal season, as many as 90% of the work days are rain days. And it's a cold rain.

Coastal Overview

Almost all coastal planting is done by working out of motels. The conditions during the coastal spring are much too cold and wet for any other type of accommodation to be comfortable (although tent camps do occasionally exist on the coast).

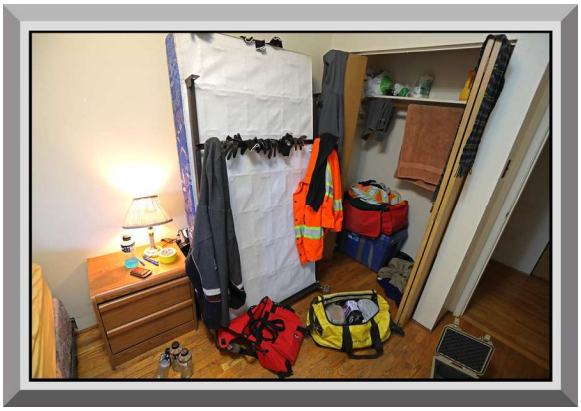

Figure 28.02
Living In A Motel.

The thing that makes the constant cold rains tolerable is that you can come home to a hot shower and a warm bed each night. Of course, you also have to think about cooking your own meals, which is a drawback for some people.

Most coastal planting takes place in the shoulder seasons, as a complement to Interior planting elsewhere in BC or other parts of Canada. Just as the BC Interior season is broken up into two parts ("spring" from mid-April to mid-June, and "summer" from mid-June to early August), the coast has two separate seasons. However, those seasons are completely separate, in the spring and fall. Coastal projects typically start in the first week of March, although a few companies occasionally start as early as late January. The spring coastal season usually isn't very long, wrapping up in mid-April to late April for most companies. At that point, a lot of the coastal planters move to positions at other companies in BC's Interior, where they work as crew leaders or planters.

The fall coastal season is not as extensive as the spring season. It usually starts in early September, and typically lasts for three to six weeks. We've estimated that approximately 10-15 million trees were planted on "coastal" projects in 2017. Compare that to approximately 260 million trees for BC as a whole in 2017. In all, the coastal workforce is probably less than 450 planters in total (compare that to BC as a whole, where an industry survey estimated that there were 4600 planters within the province in 2020).

Some of the coastal companies are also involved in other aspects of silviculture and reforestation, especially in brushing and saw work.

Geographic Regions, Clients

What exactly constitutes the 'coast' region? Well, any work on Vancouver Island or Haida Gwaii is definitely coastal work. The same would apply to work on the islands between Vancouver Island and the mainland. Some of the work on the mainland side of BC (the Sunshine Coast) is also considered to be coastal work. It could even be argued that some planting up by Prince Rupert and areas such as Meziadin Junction could be considered to be semi-coastal work, due to the steep slopes, slash loads, species diversity, and fertilization.

Vancouver Island has Tree Farm Licenses (TFL's) for Western Forest Products, Timberwest, Ma-Mook Natural Resources, Iisaak Forest Resources, Teal Cedar, and Pacheedaht Andersen Timber Holdings. In addition, there is work for Interfor and BCTS.

The TSA's for the area include the Kingcone TSA (for north Vancouver Island), the Strathcona TSA (central Island), Arrowsmith TSA (south Island), the Sunshine Coast TSA (southwest BC coast above Vancouver), the Mid-Coast TSA, and the North Coast TSA (up to and including the Prince Rupert area).

Haida Gwaii (once known as the Queen Charlotte Islands) has TFL's for Teal Cedar Products and the Tann Limited Forest Partnership. In addition, some BCTS work is done on Haida Gwaii. There is only one TSA designation for Haida Gwaii, the Queen Charlotte TSA.

The Basics

The main challenges of the coast can be broken down into about six different aspects: steep slopes, heavy slash, poor weather, remote access, multiple species, and the need for fertilization. Let's look at each of these in turn.

The slopes on coastal blocks can be fairly steep. Admittedly, there are some blocks which are perfectly flat, or at least flatter than the average Interior block. However, when a block is steep, it can be VERY steep. Slopes of greater than sixty degrees are not uncommon in some areas. Planters have to be very careful about planting near the edge of bluffs and cliffs within the blocks. If someone tripped near the edge of a bluff, it would be easy to fall 20 feet or more and be very seriously injured. In some of the steepest blocks, planters need to stop and plan out their routes for the next 15-20 trees or more. In areas with both spring and fall planting programs, expect to plant the flat blocks (at low elevations) in the spring, while the steeper blocks are left for the fall (when there is no snow risk).

Figure 28.03
Steep Coastal Block.

Look up, wayyy up. Quite often, you'll find that you're pulling yourself up the side of a mountain. You can occasionally have elevation differences of as much as 400m in your piece. It's insane.

The slash on coastal blocks can be incredible, much worse than the toughest of the Interior/Alberta/Ontario blocks that you'll ever see. Some of the pieces of slash that get left behind on coastal blocks are much larger than the trees being harvested anywhere else in Canada. I learned this lesson quickly on my very first day of spring coastal planting, when I came across a piece of 'slash' in my piece that was nine feet high and a hundred feet long. That was an obvious exception to the average, but be prepared for layers of branches that are simply unbelievably thick, several feet off the

ground. You'll probably still have to crouch down and find a place to plant a tree down between the sticks. If Hell really exists, it is full of cedar slash. The slash also makes safety a big concern, as it is much less stable than slash on normal planting blocks. You can step on what appears to be a solid looking piece of slash, only to find that it's a cedar ski that shoots down the slope beneath you. Having a good sense of balance and a low center of gravity is important.

Figure 28.01
There's No Shortage of Slash.

This is an average block in terms of slash load. You may find yourself walking across so much slash that you have to crawl down for 6-8 feet just to get to the ground level to plant a tree.

The weather in the fall is generally quite pleasant, if not too hot. Spring isn't as much fun. Vancouver Island as a whole is very wet, especially in the spring. The wind usually comes off the Pacific, and is therefore very moisture-laden. Expect weeks of solid rain in February/March/April. The entire coastal region is a temperate rain forest (in fact, BC's coastal regions account for almost 25% of the world's temperature rain forests, and are one of the wettest non-tropical areas in the world). I've been on crews that, when faced with a daily forecast of 100mm of rain and 80-100km/hr winds, and temperatures of +3 degrees or lower, simply put on an extra sweater and went to work with a strained smile. On days like this, you'll find that it's absolutely critical to wear a pair of 8mm thickness nitrile gloves underneath your usual black nitridex gloves (or whatever you wear). These nitrile gloves will make your hands wet and clammy, but they'll trap a layer of warmer sweat against your skin, and keep your fingers mobile in conditions where they wouldn't be otherwise. On those really cold days, make sure your body core remains warm, even if it means two wool sweaters and full rain gear, otherwise your body will draw your blood supply away from your extremities and redirect it to your core, and your fingers simply won't allow you to plant.

Access to various blocks can be challenging. On some contracts, you may be able to stay in a motel in a major town, and drive to the blocks. On other contracts, you may end up living on a floating barge, and taking a water taxi or helicopter or float plane to work. Helicopters can't generally land on the blocks that necessitate them, so heli-pads are built by the loggers which jut out from the steep slopes, and allow a helicopter to set down and shut down (with the tail rotor out away from the hill), or at the very least allow a machine to toe in and reduce power long enough for a planter to climb out carefully while the machine is trying to maintain balance. The Huey 500 is the machine of choice for most coastal work.

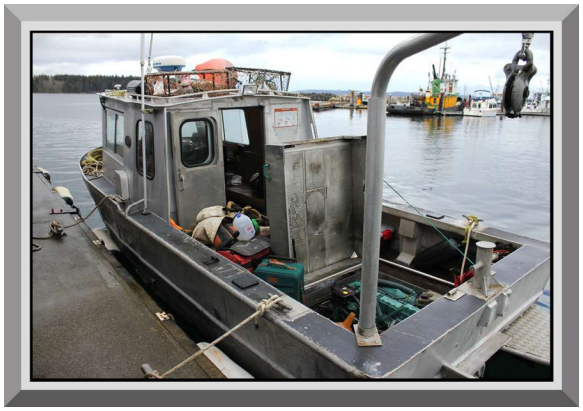

Figure 28.05
A Water Taxi.

A lot of access is accomplished through the use of boats, barges, and water taxis.

It is common for planters to be required to plant multiple species in each piece. A typical block may require three or four separate species, in different ratios and with different expectations. A typical prescription might consist of the following: 55% red cedar (fertilized), 25% Douglas Fir (fertilized), 15% hemlock (not fertilized) and 5% white pine (fertilized), all planted at 1000 stems/Ha density, with the Douglas Fir and Pine being expected to be planted in microsites with mineral soil, and the cedar and hemlock being allowed in organics. Planters will have to know the characteristics and preferred microsites for each species that they're working with. It is common for coastal planters to use four-bagger planting bags, to make it easier to keep multiple species separate in their bags. Microsite selection is important for every tree.

Fertilizing trees is a new concept for almost all planters who come from northern BC, Alberta, or anywhere in central or eastern Canada. Different types of fertilizer are available. The chemical composition of these various fertilizers is not something that planters pay attention to. The format can also vary. Tea-bags are common. Pucks or loose fertilizer are very uncommon. Fertilization of trees has already been discussed in the chapter about "Additional Planting Techniques." It is fairly annoying to have to plant tea-bags that have gotten wet, but you'll get used to it fairly quickly during a coastal spring plant. Planters usually get paid an extra three or four cents for each tree that needs fertilizer. Three cents currently seems like a fair price when all species are being ferted simultaneously, and not much mental agility is required. Four cents seems to be more appropriate when only certain species of a mixed bag are being fertilized, or when multiple types of fertilizer are needed (different types for different trees in your bags).

Figure 28.06
Fertilizing Your Trees is Common.

This is the label for a bag containing 2000 ferts, or "tea-bags" as they're more commonly known. This large bag contains twenty smaller packs which each have 100 ferts in them (although they're measured by weight so the count is frequently slightly incorrect).

If you learned to plant ambi, you'll have an advantage when it comes to ferting on the coast. Although "same hole" ferting is now permitted almost everywhere, thanks to product changes by RTI (a major supplier of ferts), you may still be expected to plant your ferts "uphill" from the seedlings. If that's the case, when planters are working laterally across steep slopes, the ones who can plant ambi will have an advantage because they don't have to switch to separate-hole ferting for half their trees. Incidentally, if you're an ambi planter, you'll probably want to attach a fert pouch to both sides of your planting bags, to facilitate grabbing ferts in either hand. Another alternative is to learn to grab ferts from a single pouch attached to the center of your belt, which can be grabbed easily with either hand.

You'll probably see some different flora and fauna than you're used to. Interior planters who want to learn to recognize coastal plants should do research on species such as salal, salmonberry, and sword fern. You should also become familiar with quite a few tree species that you might not end up planting elsewhere, including: Douglas fir, balsam fir, amabilis fir, western (red) cedar, yellow cedar, white pine, sitka spruce, western hemlock, and mountain hemlock. The birds won't be new, as you'll see lots of crows, ravens, and bald eagles. However, you'll probably experience some insects that you don't see elsewhere, such as banana slugs, and amphibians such as salamanders. The central and southern Island also has lots of snakes.

Figure 28.07
Banana Slug.

Banana slugs are quite common on the coast, although I've never seen one anywhere else in Canada. These slugs are typically between four and six inches long.

Planting Specifications

Quality and density are often very different on the coast than in BC's Interior. But like the Interior, coastal planting can feature an enormous amount of variety.

Some parts of the coast are incredibly rocky. In other parts of the coast, the ground is soft and mossy with lots of organics, and rocks are only seen intermittently (although they may be the size of small houses). In my experience, as in other areas, density is often the forester's biggest long-term concern. Most planters who work on the coast have extensive experience, and have undergone detailed reference checks, and will know how to plant good trees. The biggest issues that I've seen on a consistent basis are faults for trees that are too close, leaning (especially with large stock), have fertilizer problems, or are planted in an inappropriate medium (sticks, needles, or chunky red rot).

Some planters think that the typical densities on the coast should be listed as another typical challenge. The densities prescribed on the coast are typically lower than in BC's Interior. Many coastal blocks will ask for densities between 800 stems/Ha and 1200 stems/Ha. This seems like it would be annoying to an Interior planter who is accustomed to densities between 1400 and 2000 stems/Ha. A higher density in the Interior is better, because it means less walking between each tree. However, the lower densities on the coast are often beneficial to planters. In many blocks, it's very hard to find enough plantable spots, so needing to find five spots per plot is easier than trying to find seven or eight.

Throwing plots can be quite challenging, due to the slash and the slopes. The slash just makes spinning a plot a much slower process than in the Interior. The slopes mean that measuring a horizontal plot circle is especially important to get a true measure of density, and planters have to space significantly further going up/down slopes to reflect this geometric characteristic.

Coastal Safety Tips

You'll find a few things to be very different on the coast than they are in Interior BC.

Movement and body positioning is critical. You always need to be aware of the way that your body is positioned once you get onto a steeper slope and you're balancing on slash. People talk about "three point contact" and how you're far less likely to fall when you follow that practice. You have two feet and two arms/hands/shovel. So long as three of them are in contact with something sturdy at any given time (the ground, holding a branch), the chance of you falling is slim. On relatively flat ground, you can get away with two-point contact all the time (your legs), or even one-point when you're balancing on one leg. But if you're working your way along a cliff face, or across some slash with a considerable drop below you, it makes sense to be slow and cautious. Try to anticipate which way you'll fall and how you can react if your support gives way.

Figure 28.08
Keep Your Caulks Sharp.

Caulked boots are mandatory on the coast. Keep them sharp. You'll need to keep changing out some of your caulk spikes every couple of shifts to keep things sharp.
Photo Credit: Greg Vorster.

It's quite easy to fall and hurt yourself on the coast, if you lose your balance. You may often be working on steep blocks. It isn't uncommon to be trying to plant a tree in a position where, if you

move three or four feet laterally, you have a ten or fifteen foot drop. A good practice is to stay three meters away from cliff edges. Although this can cost you a lot of plantable ground on a steep block, most clients accept and even prefer this. You don't want to catch your foot in some salal when you're working a cliff edge, and go over.

Quite often, you'll find yourself crawling awkwardly over a pile of slash, or balancing precarious while you're trying to plant a tree. Always be aware of what's beneath you. Be aware of any sharp pointed sticks in the slash that could stab you if you fall onto them (this can be fairly common on some blocks). Don't position your body directly above a suicide stick, no matter how securely you think you're positioned. Impalement would be a lousy way to die. On some contracts, you're required to carry pressure bandages in case you puncture or cut yourself and have significant blood loss.

Figure 28.09
Carry a Pressure Bandage.

Even if you're not required to, it's probably a good idea to carry a pressure bandage while you're planting. I carry a couple of them to be safe – one in my back bag (in a zip lock), and one taped up under my hardhat. WorkSafe probably doesn't allow you to do the hard hat trick.

You'll be walking on slash quite frequently, and balancing on logs and branches. Be aware that branches can break when you don't expect them to. Distribution of weight is helpful. If you end up putting both feet (all your weight) on a single branch, it's much more likely to break than if you have a second point of contact beneath you. Also, when you're standing on a branch, the further away from the trunk you're standing, the more likely the branch is to break. And then you go down.

Tripping is more of a hazard on the coast than in the interior, due to both the risk of falling down a steep slope, or falling onto sharp objects. If your boot laces have large loops, you may find that they catch on slash sometimes and trip you up. Two solutions are to tuck your laces back into your boots, or even easier, use some duct tape around them once your boots are on.

On steep slopes, you'll often find that it's easiest to go uphill if you keep cutting back and forth diagonally uphill, rather than trying to go straight up. Watch out for loose bark on logs. You'll think you have secure footing, but then the bark breaks away and you go down. Walking on loose bark has resulted in a large number of fumbles and tumbles (and injuries).

Earlier in this book I mentioned that the chance of a cougar attack is rare. Nonetheless, it's still a possibility. Keep your wits about you. A very significant proportion of Canada's cougar population lives on Vancouver Island. They haven't been known historically to attack tree planters, but in 2018

there was an incident with a cougar attacking a dog on the block. Cougars frequently come into towns like Port Alice and Port Hardy, killing pets. They weigh more than some planters, and they're fast and strong. Thankfully, they're also very wary of people. In the very unlikely event that you get attacked by a cougar, fight back. You have a shovel.

Speaking of unlikely events, there may be a small possibility that a major earthquake will hit the west coast within our lifetimes. Considering that planters are working on Vancouver Island for at least four months of each year, and for at least a third of each calendar day, if a big earthquake really hits, there's at least a ten percent chance that planters will be on the blocks at the time. If you're working on a steep coastal cliff and a major earthquake hits, let's be realistic: you're probably fucked. There aren't really any safety protocols discussed for this type of hazard. My advice is that stumps can be extremely strong. If you're on a hill, try to get directly below a big stump and stay there, if you aren't being thrown around too much. That way, if rocks start rolling down the hill at you, the stump might shelter you from being crushed. Hopefully you survive, then you can figure out what to do about the fact that the roads back to town will probably be blocked by dozens of slides and hundreds of fallen trees.

Figure 28.10
Road Blocked By Slide.

The coastal rains tend to destabilize many of the cliffs, and many regions deal with frequent landslides that wipe out roads and parts of the blocks. This slide happened at some point since we had been there the previous day.

In some parts of the coast, you'll be warned about karst. Karst is a geological feature, which can sometimes be created over a very long time period, when water slowly dissolves water-soluble rocks such as limestone or gypsum, creating gaps, pits, caves, or sinkholes. Although it is somewhat rare, a planter can be walking through a block and suddenly see a giant hole in the ground, which can be a significant safety hazard. I've had a couple of karst holes in my pieces. One large one was about thirty feet across and twenty feet deep, in a funnel shape. That one was easy to see. I almost fell into another one on the first bundle of my spring planting season in 2016. The opening was only two feet wide and covered over with salal, and I put one foot into it and luckily recovered. When I took a closer look, it was a narrow chimney hole that looked to be about twenty feet deep. I was extremely lucky not to have fallen into it.

Pros and Cons

Having read everything that I've written so far, you're probably wondering why anyone would want to plant on the coast. There are really only three main reasons to want to plant on the coast:

1. To extend your season. The coastal work, for the most part, falls outside of the regulation conventional spring/summer planting elsewhere in Canada.
2. The prices. The prices on the coast are unquestionably higher than in the Interior. However, remember that pricing means nothing unless taken in context with the difficulty of the block! The additional challenges mean that daily earnings may be no higher (and in fact, can be lower) than planting in BC's Interior. However, the high prices are indicative of a different benefit: the challenge. Coastal planting is definitely more interesting than planting anywhere else.
3. Nothing better to do. Enough said. Some people don't like to sit on the couch, drawing EI.

As I mentioned, higher prices do not always translate into higher earnings. I kept extensive spreadsheets of my earnings over a period of many years on the coast, and many years (as a planter, outside of my regular supervisory contracts) at a "typical northern BC rookie mill." I was surprised to find that my hourly earnings were actually slightly higher at the northern company than for my coastal work. This isn't the case for everyone, but it does hold true for some. Some planters prefer climbing up hills and jumping around in slash. I prefer fast, cheap ground where muscle memory comes into play and you can work up a good rhythm. My slogan is "gravity sucks." I would rather bend over 3500 times in a day on flat land than climb up a sixty-degree slope covered with slash, if the earnings are equal. But to each their own.

There are two main financial drawbacks to coastal planting. First, a large portion of the work is done out of motels, which means that you're paying for a room every night (perhaps $25) plus buying and cooking your own food (another $25). These costs are higher than camp costs in Interior planting camps, and have to be paid even on days when you're not able to work. This dynamic is discussed more thoroughly in the "Camp Life" chapter, in the subsection about tent Camps vs. Motel Shows.

The other drawback about coastal planting is the inconsistency of spring planting, due to weather. If you're lucky, you'll only have a handful of snow days in any given season. However, some years are worse than others, and it isn't unheard of to deal with 10-15 snow days or more in one short spring coastal contract. When you're staring at the walls in a dreary motel in Port Alberni or Port Alice in February, snowed out and watching your bank balance go down for days at a time while you wait for snow to melt, you may start to wonder if taking a coastal planting job was a wise decision.

A lot of people go into their first coastal contract with a lot of excitement for having finally "made it to the big leagues," and have high expectations for their experience. Remember, expectation is the thief of joy.

Budgeting

As mentioned, costs are higher for working on the coast. I'll try to break those down, so if you do decide to go planting, you're ready for what you're getting yourself into.

First, as already mentioned, the cost of living is higher. Try as I might, I can't get my daily food costs under $24/day, and that's eating purely from grocery stores. Granted, I like to eat a lot, and I eat a variety of foods, but a fairly decent portion of what I eat is stir-fries, pasta dinners, and rice with vegetables and random budget meat parts. If you're cooking for yourself, which happens 90% of the time (unless you're working on a barge or in a remote lodge or logging camp), assume that you'll need to set aside at least $24 per day. Perhaps significantly more than that if you're working out of a motel in a civilized community, and you like to be lazy and order pizzas or go to restaurants frequently. If you enjoy health supplements, alcohol, pot, and/or smokes, you may as well lump those items into your food budget so you don't feel so guilty, but make sure that you increase your daily budget significantly. The so-called "sin taxes" really hurt your bottom line.

At the moment, paying $25 per day for "camp costs" (which could instead be called "lodging costs") is fairly common. You'll be able to find out the exact amount in advance by talking to your employer. Remember to calculate each of the previous two items based on a calendar week, not a work week. You still need to eat and have a bed to sleep in for the days that you're not planting.

The coast is especially hard on gear and planting equipment. Based on ten years of coastal planting, I've determined that my boot costs work out to approximately $4 per planting day. If you buy inexpensive books (Blue Vikings), they probably won't last very long. If you buy mid-range or high-end boots, they'll last longer, so your higher up-front investment will last longer. I've tried several types of caulks on the coast, but for quite a few years I wore Viking Black Tusks, which cost around $240 plus tax, and usually lasted for about sixty to sixty-five planting days before I needed to get a new pair. I also went through a lot of pairs of rain pants, and I usually ended up buying a new raincoat every third season. In the long term, I found that keeping myself supplied with gloves, rain gear, and proper cold-weather clothing usually cost me about five to six dollars per day.

Let's assume that your first coastal spring season runs from about February 20th to April 20th, which I'd say is in the middle of the pack between long and short seasons (some companies occasionally start planting in January, others don't start until mid-March). Let's also try to be optimistic, and say that it will be a fairly consistent 3&1 shift schedule, and there will only be three days where it's impossible to plant due to weather, plus three more days of additional downtime (between contracts, extra days off to give the crew time to rest up more, etc.). In sixty calendar days, that would work out to about 39 planting days. That would be in the upper range of a typical spring season for me, but as mentioned, some companies start earlier than others. Here are some numbers:

$24.00 Daily food budget
$25.00 Daily lodging costs

	$ 4.00	Daily boot budget
	$ 5.00	Daily clothing allowance
	$58.00	Total daily costs (exclusive of addiction costs)
x	60	Calendar days
$	3,480	Total costs
/	39	Planting Days
$	89.23	Approximate employment-related expenses per PLANTING Day

I know that this seems very high, but the numbers are verifiable. This is one of the reasons why coastal tree prices are higher than in the Interior. They have to be, in order to compensate people for their high cost of living. I hope you didn't expect that you'd show up on coastal blocks and those tasty high prices would be given out for easy ground that is similar to what you'd plant in the Interior.

Figure out your estimated daily production earnings, and subtract that $83 per day to come up with your estimated daily net earnings. After one season, you'll be able to figure these numbers out more accurately, because you'll actually know your average daily planting earnings, rather than having to guess. Incidentally, I highly recommend that you track your exact daily earnings on a spreadsheet. It's the only way to base your decisions on accurate personal numbers. Remember that when you do a mental assessment of your daily earnings, you'll always guess at a number that is far higher than the truth, because it makes you feel better about your life choices. There's nothing like a well-organized spreadsheet to slap you in the face and make you think carefully about whether or not coastal planting is truly worth it.

As a side note, remember that for a significant number of people, daily planting earnings on the coast are no higher than they are at decent Interior companies. It's a supply/demand issue. There are too many willing planters chasing a very small number of coastal planting jobs, which keeps the prices below what they should realistically be. If I come across as sounding bitter about this situation, I'm not. I enjoy coastal planting, in a sick and twisted way. However, I need to give readers a dose of reality, to temper your expectations in case you think that coastal planting is some sort of magical fantasy fairyland where you'll make fat stacks of cash simply by showing up. It's a tough, tough game, and a resumé with four or five years of Interior experience is simply not adequate to prepare you for a tough coastal contract.

Another issue is that coastal companies are under increasing pressure to start their spring programs slightly later, and then bang them off quickly using a large number of planters in a race to finish before the work force migrates to the Interior. So instead of starting February 20th and working until April 28th, it's often common now to see a contract starting March 10th and wrapping up April 15th, which cuts down significantly on the number of planting days, and makes it less appealing to travel to the Island for the work.

Finally, while coastal prices have been stagnant or declining on most contracts over the past several years due to low volumes and an oversupply of labour, Interior prices saw significant gains starting in 2018 and continuing through until the 2023 season. The sad reality is that earnings potentials are quite a bit higher now at some northern Interior rookie mills than on most coastal contracts. We live in crazy times.

Pro Tips

Here are a few of my own personal suggestions, having worked as a planter on the coast for more than a decade:

- *Flag high* – Ribbon on the ground is often impossible to see until you're almost on top of it.
- *Keep your caulks sharp* – On dangerous ground, I always change out half of the caulks on each boot approximately every six to eight planting days (so all caulks end up getting replaced every twelve to sixteen planting days).
- *Manage your species ratios* – Sometimes you'll be planting four or five species at a time. For the species which are "hard to plant" because your microsite options are limited, always try to plant those out first if you have an opportunity. A species like cedar, which can usually go everywhere, should always be kept mostly for the latter part of your bag-up.
- *Plan your route* – Sometimes it's worth pausing for fifteen or twenty sections to study the ground in front of you, and figure out the most efficient way to area plant your way through the slash.
- *Bring a scarf* – Nobody else really seems to appreciate the value of a scarf, but when I'm working day after day in cold rain, for weeks at a time, I love having a wool scarf to keep the back of my neck warm.

Coastal Companies

Here is a list of many of the well-known coastal contractors. Remember, this is a very small niche industry, with only a few hundred employees in any given year, most of whom have far, far more experience than the typical "vet" found in the BC Interior or in Ontario. As an example, my spring 2018 coastal crew consisted of eight planters plus a crew leader. Between us, we had over 180 years of planting experience, of which approximately eighty years was doing coastal work. I didn't really think much about this dynamic until one day, a planter that I was sharing my cache with mentioned something about his grandchildren.

Do NOT contact any of these companies looking for employment unless you meet three important qualifications. Otherwise, you are wasting your own time, plus the time of the person receiving your email:

- You should have at least five years of planting experience.
- At least two of those years should be on technically challenging blocks in BC.

- You must be able to provide extensive positive references. Don't wait for them to ask you for references; list them out in explicit detail when you reach out to the company.

Some of these companies won't even look at your application unless you have a minimum of 8-10 years of prior documented planting experience in BC. Most of these companies will not even answer your email asking for work if they're not interested in hiring you.

Bivouac West – Typically works on the north Island, especially around Holberg. Often has a very long spring season with a very early start. Usually only does coastal work.
Email: roland@bivouacwest.com

Brinkman & Associates – Has a very long-standing contract in Woss. Runs the only regular coastal tent-camp operation. Brinkman's coastal work is a very small portion of their overall national operations.
Email: matt_robertson@brinkman.ca

Evergreen Forest Services – Based out of Campbell River. Does roughly equivalent amounts of work on both the coast and in the BC Interior spring. Does some saw work when the planting season is over.
Email: egn@netidea.com

Fieldstone Resources – Coastal and southern Interior work.
Email: mike_clasby@telus.net

Greenpeaks Resources Management – Doesn't seem to plant coastal projects these days. Southern Interior planting work, and lots of saw work.
Email: isforest@gmail.com

Hawkeye Holdings – Small scale operations.

Lukwa Tree Care Enterprises – A small coastal-only company based out of Quadra Island, using only local residents for their workforce.

Nootka Reforestation – Coastal work only.
Email: info@nootkareforestation.com

Rainforest Contracting – Don't call them; they'll call you.

Sitka Silviculture – Coastal work only. Has often shared some of their workforce with Leader, which is a highly respected company that works in the Interior.
Email: sitkasilv@yahoo.ca

Stephan Contracting – Does most of their work on Haida Gwaii with a local workforce. Saw work is a larger part of their annual workload than planting. Don't even bother applying. They'll find you if they want you.

Timberline Reforestation – Does roughly equal amounts of coastal planting and southern Interior work.
Email: renemonjo@gmail.com

Wagner – A small company that does a bit of work on the south and central portions of Vancouver Island, plus some saw work.
Email: wagnerreforestation@gmail.com

Zanzibar – Starting to be a more common presence on the coast lately, after re-entering the market with a splash in the fall of 2020.
Email: tony@zanzibar.ca

Bivouac was using a different operating name recently due to management restructuring.

As mentioned, don't pester these companies looking for work unless you have extensive planting experience in BC, and can document that experience with detailed, positive references up front. Otherwise, you're just wasting your time and their time.

For some additional public thoughts about coastal planting, read the following link:
www.replant.ca/coastalthoughts.pdf

I have a book of coastal planting photos and related information. There is information at this link:
www.replant.ca/fromourfootsteps

For more photo and video resources associated with this chapter of the book, including links to a number of other photo galleries with literally hundreds of additional photos, visit:
www.replant.ca/training/coastal