

## Chapter 11 - “Planting Throughout Canada”

At the start of this book, I mentioned that the focus would predominantly be about planting in BC, but that a lot of the information would also be applicable to other provinces. In this chapter, I’ll add some notes about planting in different parts of Canada.

If you have any feedback about the information that I’ve included in this chapter, or would like to contribute additional information that could be incorporated in the 2027 edition of this book, please send an email to [scooter@replant.ca](mailto:scooter@replant.ca)

If you are aware of any corrections to contact information for any of the companies listed herein, please let me know so I can update the information in future editions.

### British Columbia

The majority of this book focuses on rules for planting within BC, so I don’t need to rehash any of that information here. The only data that I’ll add is that the minimum wage in BC currently sits at \$17.85/hr since June 2025. On June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026 the rate will rise based upon a CPI adjustment, but the exact new rate wasn’t known at the time of publication of this edition.

Also, although this chapter includes lists of known companies for all provinces other than BC, you’ll find the BC companies listed in the previous chapter, “Applying For A Job.”

### Alberta

The Alberta planting industry shares many things in common with the BC planting industry. The land and prices are somewhat dissimilar, but other than that, you’ll find that many planters work in both provinces in a given season, and a significant amount of the planting that is done in Alberta is done by companies based in British Columbia.

Planting in Alberta takes place throughout a significant portion of the province. In fact, due to the inaccessibility of a great portion of BC’s forested areas, it’s probably fair to say that there’s a greater geographic spread to forest harvesting in Alberta than in BC, even though a lot of the southeast side

of the province is prairie land which doesn't see significant logging activity. The entire northern part of the province is predominantly boreal forest or coniferous forests, until you get to the extreme northern regions close to Nunavet. In the northwest corner of the province, the Tolko High Level mill has an extremely large land base to work with, and is one of the top harvesting operations in North America. Moving further south, the western part of the province has a lot of woodlands to the west of highway 22, down through the foothills of the Rockies. If you're south of the Yellowhead highway, and east of Highway 22, most of the land base is farming or prairies.

The towns that most tree planters might be based out of include, from north to south: High Level, Manning, Peace River, Grand Prairie, High Prairie, Slave Lake, Fort McMurray, Swan Hills, Fox Creek, Whitecourt, Grand Cache, Hinton, Edson, Drayton Valley, Rocky Mountain House, Sundre, Cochrane, and Blairmore.

The list of FMA (Forest Management Agreement) holders throughout Alberta includes the following forest harvesting operations: Alberta Pacific (Alpac), Alberta Newsprint Company (ANC), Canadian Forest Products (Canfor), Tolko, Vanderwell, West Fraser, and Weyerhaeuser. Some of these major companies (Canfor, West Fraser) run large mills in multiple locations throughout Alberta.

In 2022, a total of 88,180 Ha were harvested throughout Alberta. This compares to 112,902 Ha harvested in BC in the same year. In Alberta, the amount of ground that was planted represented 93% (82,327 Ha) of the amount of land harvested. The rest was left for natural regeneration. This is a major change from several years prior. For example, back in 2016, Alberta only replanted 59% of the land that was harvested.

Next Generation Reforestation (NGR) is the largest planting contractor that is based out of Alberta, headquartered in Beaverlodge (west of Grand Prairie). They work all over the province, often planting approximately thirty million trees per year. NGR uses a workforce comprised of both vets and first-year planters, working out of several bush camps. Northern Reforestation is a smaller company which is mostly vets, and usually only operates one camp. They are based out of Slave Lake, and their season is usually shorter than NGR's. And finally, there are a handful of small companies which do not run bush camps, including Apical, Shakti, and Tree Time Services (none of whom hire inexperienced applicants). Here are some links:

NGR: [www.nextgenerationreforestation.com](http://www.nextgenerationreforestation.com)

Northern: [www.northernreforestation.com](http://www.northernreforestation.com)

Apical: [www.apicalforestry.com](http://www.apicalforestry.com)

Shakti: [www.shaktitrees.com](http://www.shaktitrees.com)

Tree Time Services: [www.treetimeservices.ca](http://www.treetimeservices.ca)

As noted, some of the companies mentioned above run regular camp-based operations for the majority of their projects, similar to planting in other provinces, while others specialize in doing oil field, pipeline, and lease reclamation work. If you are involved in planting on projects related to

O&G, you may be planting reclaimed bitumen extraction areas, reclaimed oil lease pads where infrastructure has been decommissioned and removed, or pipeline work, which may even involve planting grasses or other species instead of trees. In all of the above cases, you should be mentally prepared to expect the same rules and safety protocols that any other O&G contractor would be subject to, including wearing protective clothing or coveralls, high vis shirts or vests, hard hats, safety glasses, and gas monitors. You should also be prepared to take drug tests, and to work on drug-free and alcohol-free worksites. You are often going to be lodged in motels or in remote work camps.

I mentioned that BC companies take care of a lot of the planting throughout Alberta. This is the case everywhere from High Level down to the bottom of the province, southwest of Calgary. A short list of some of the BC companies that often do significant amounts of work in Alberta includes: Blue Collar, Brinkman, Folklore, Rhino, Spectrum, and Summit.

Tree prices for planters in Alberta are generally a bit lower than in BC (except for specialized oil patch and reclamation work). In most places, Alberta blocks are flatter, better soils, and less slash than in BC. Some people joke that Alberta doesn't have any hills or rocks. You can generally expect to plant larger numbers of trees in a day in Alberta than in BC, and you'll have to if you want your daily earnings to be the same. This isn't to say that the prices are worse than in BC, because the land is usually a lot faster. Some planters like BC better, and some like Alberta better.

At the time of publication, the minimum wage in Alberta (since 2018) is \$15.00 per hour plus applicable vacation and statutory holiday pay. In that year, Alberta had the highest minimum wage in the country. It hasn't changed since then, so as of early 2026, it is the lowest in the country. Overtime is paid out at 1.5 times the regular hourly rate (ie. \$22.50 plus applicable vacation and statutory holiday pay) for all hours exceeding 8 hours worked in a day or exceeding 44 hours worked in a week (Sunday morning through Saturday evening).

The learning curve for new planters is probably easier overall in Alberta. This isn't due just to the topography and soils. Quality expectations are different in northern Alberta than in BC. In southern parts of the province, chinooks cause significant damage to plantations, and planters have to deal with the challenges of obstacle planting, and screefing down to 100% mineral soil. To be fair, planting in the southern parts of Alberta, south of Calgary, is a lot different than planting in the rest of the province. That small corner of the province is very similar to planting in BC's southern Interior, and planters need to adhere to especially rigorous planting specs to try to prevent significant seedling mortality.

Companies often have higher expenses when working in Alberta (compared to BC) due to the access challenges. Significantly greater vehicle and equipment resources (and ATV's) need to be allocated to Alberta projects in order to keep the production on track. These challenges ensure that overhead costs are much higher on Alberta projects than in BC. It is very rare that a crew is able to "park and plant" in Alberta. Production is negatively impacted on most helicopter access, because planters are often forced to sit and wait for machines to move them to and from their blocks. Also, average block

sizes in Alberta are much smaller than in BC, which is another hidden challenge that reduces efficiency and increases costs.

The season usually starts later in Alberta than in BC. It's fairly rare to see trees being planted in Alberta before mid-May. The foresters in some parts of the province want all their trees finished by the start of July, and it is certainly rare to find much planting still happening in August, except for very small specialty work on leases and reclamation projects. Also, Alberta can be miserable when it rains. Access is often quite terrible, due to the low amounts of rock in many areas. It's common for planters to have to make long walks into blocks, and it's also much more common to work with helicopters in Alberta than it is in any other province.

The prevalence of site prep in Alberta is probably similar to certain parts of BC. The main exception is mounds: You'll find various types of mounding (donaren, excavator, and even Bräcke mounds) much more frequently than in BC, when foresters try to mitigate unfavorable planting conditions in swampy ground, or try to ensure that the seedlings aren't choked out by grass competition. The main species that you'll plant in Alberta are lodgepole pine, white spruce, hybrid spruce, and smaller amounts of black spruce.

All provincial labour laws apply in Alberta. There are no special regulations for silviculture employees. Camp costs are not regulated in Alberta, so it is common to see camp costs that are above \$25/day in Alberta, exceeding \$30/day in some cases. This is understandable considering that food is generally more expensive there than in neighbouring provinces. In fact, except for the price of fuel, most other significant expenses (food/lodging/labour) are higher in Alberta than in other provinces, despite the lack of a provincial sales tax. This was especially obvious several years ago, when oil prices were still high. The differential has been diminishing slowly as the formerly red-hot labour market has cooled down.

## Manitoba/Saskatchewan

Both of these provinces have logging industries, although their geography and transportation infrastructure make it difficult for products to be exported (except to the US Midwest).

In Saskatchewan, a small company called Smokey Lake was the only well-known reforestation contractor, although they don't operate anymore (2021 was their last planting season). There are scattered pockets of reforestation work available throughout the province, although the area up around Meadow Lake seems to be the only consistent region to find work, driven by licenses such as Mistik Management. Summit and Outland generally plant most of the trees in Saskatchewan. In 2022, a total of 21,184 Ha were harvested throughout Saskatchewan. This compares to 112,902 Ha harvested in BC in the same year.

In Manitoba, the scope of planting operations is similarly limited. Outland has historically had a planting camp based in Manitoba, and Summit also plants in Manitoba. In 2022, a total of 9,091 Ha were harvested throughout Manitoba. This compares to 112,902 Ha harvested in BC in the same year.

At the time of writing, the minimum wage for 2026 was \$16.00/hr in Manitoba and \$15.35/hr in Saskatchewan.

## Ontario

Ontario has a mature planting industry, which has consolidated in recent years to a handful of large planting companies. Let's look at some numbers from a few years ago. In 2022, a total of 111,545 Ha were harvested throughout Ontario. This compares to 112,902 Ha harvested in BC in the same year. However, the amount of harvested area that is planted is significantly different. In 2022, the amount of area planted in BC represented 168% of the amount of land that was harvested (due to wildfire recovery), whereas in Ontario, the amount planted only represented 46% (51,499 Ha) of the amount of land harvested. Most of the rest was left for natural regeneration, although 7,432 Ha were seeded (Ontario is the only province with a significant seeding program).

Most of Ontario's planting takes place in "northern Ontario," although that's a broad generalization. Many planters will spend their days off in various small towns or villages along routes 11 and 17, if they can get to those municipalities. The planting camps themselves are quite often set up at least two hours away from a nearby town, limiting free time and mobility on days off. Many camps are set up on inactive logging roads, and are very remote in terms of their location and proximity to anything resembling real civilization. Unlike BC/Alberta, almost all of these towns became smaller the further north you travel, quite often only having an LCBO, grocery store, and local hardware store or general store.

Camp operations are common among the employers in Ontario. Camp facilities are generally less advanced in Ontario than in western Canada, with less enforcement of camp standards legislation, and not as much investment into equipment and structures. The fleets used by planting contractors are much less versatile. While an F350 crew cab with full 4x4 capabilities is the standard minimum vehicle configuration in western Canada, Ontario still uses a lot of multi-passenger vans, and even uses school buses to get to some of the larger blocks. Similarly, the safety programs at many of the Ontario companies are far less developed than is the norm in the western Canadian planting industry, although national companies such as Brinkman are definitely trying to improve this situation in the Ontario region. However, one aspect of safety programs that is enforced fairly consistently throughout Ontario is the widespread use of PPE. It is typical for Ontario planters to be required to wear hard hats, hi vis, and steel toed boots, whereas these items may not be required in some other parts of the country (except in a few small pockets on BC's coast, and for planting in the

oil patch). It's unfortunate that the reforestation industry in Ontario doesn't treat vehicle safety with the same priority as forcing planters to wear hard hats.

A day off for an Ontario planter is usually not comparable to a day off in western Canada (where planters have a better chance of enjoying amenities such as laundromats, recreation centers, and a variety of restaurants). Many Ontario planters forego frequent washing of their clothing for the short planting season, or if they feel ambitious, might purchase detergent and remain in camp to wash their clothes in a nearby lake. On a positive note, in Ontario, it seems that almost every planting camp has a lake within walking distance.

All planting contractors in BC are required to file a written "Notice of Project" to the government before setting up a temporary bush camp, and compliance inspections from various government agencies (WorkSafe, Ministry of Forests, Northern/Southern Health Authority, and Conservation Officers) are common. While Ontario's Notice of Camp Opening is technically a requirement, it seems that there has not been universal enforcement in the past. Some companies still attempt to fly "under the radar" with some of their operations. Perhaps this is why a lot of planters joke about planting in "Onterrible." Thankfully, this situation has improved somewhat with the industry consolidation of the past few years, and camps are improving at most companies.

Prices in Ontario are lower than in BC, but they have improved in the past few years. In 2019, it was still common for planters to be paid as low as 9 cents per tree in Ontario. Thankfully, most companies now pay at least 13, and sometimes more. However, tree prices are rarely modified to reflect a long walk-in, long drive to a block, or difficult access on a block. The price will probably remain the same even if the planters have to deal with a 3km walk-in (often while bagged up), a two-hour drive, or literally wading waist deep through a swamp to reach the block. In addition, there is a lot of free labour: Planters are rarely paid for duties such as camp setup, camp teardown, or unloading a reefer full of trees.

The Ontario season starts in early- to mid-May, but usually runs shorter than the season in western Canada. Many companies offer between 35-50 planting days, and finish their seasonal planting work by the end of June (which forces many planters to seek alternative summer employment for July/August). However, some companies also offer additional types of work such as thinning (using brush saws), which might keep a small group of employees working until the end of the summer or even into the fall.

The ground conditions can be tough in some places in Ontario. Again, it is difficult to generalize, but if you're travelling along Highway 17, north of Lake Superior, you'll be struck by the scenic beauty of rugged rocks and water, interspersed with occasional pockets of sand. Your blocks in Ontario may be somewhat similar. The ground conditions in Ontario vary, but are frequently littered with swamps. Of the 71.1 million Ha of forest cover in Ontario, almost half (35 million Ha) are wetlands. Unsurprisingly, the most common tree is the black spruce (37% of all growing stock), and the standard quality for planting this species includes planting the seedlings directly into sphagnum

moss, which is frequently so abundant that it may cover an entire piece or block. Jack pine trees are planted commonly in some areas, when ground conditions permit.

In Ontario it is still possible to plant "trays" of trees rather than boxes. Trays may hold significantly fewer trees than boxes, depending on the type of tray, forcing planters to bag up more often. If a block has poor access, the trays make it more difficult to move trees to between caches. However, the industry is moving toward greater use of boxes.

Planters do not seem to use flagging tape in Ontario, whereas it is used commonly (on almost every tree) throughout western Canada. Perhaps this is due to the expense of purchasing flagging tape. Most companies in BC cover the cost of flagging tape for their planters. Having said this, with the current national focus on the elimination of single-use plastics in the next few years, this will eventually cease to be something that differentiates Ontario's industry from western Canada's.

As already mentioned, government enforcement of labour laws and other regulations seems to be somewhat of a joke in Ontario. Some companies still only issue small cash advances throughout the season (when planters beg for spending money) and then don't do a final payout until weeks or months after the planting season has ended. If you have financial obligations throughout the summer, such as paying rent on an apartment in the city, or putting down deposits on university tuition, this may be a problem for you. Thankfully, this is something that has been changing rapidly, very recently. Haveman and Brinkman both pay bi-weekly, and when they started to do that, it was a seismic shift within Ontario's industry. If you seek planting employment in Ontario, I'd very strongly recommend that you accept a position with a company that has a proven track record of meeting bi-weekly pay obligations.

Always do careful research into a company before accepting a position with them. Talk to other planters who worked for the company the previous season, to see if the claims of the recruiting personnel match the stories that you hear. If your research shows that a company only offered cash advances the previous season, but is promising to pay regular bi-weekly cheques for the coming season, don't believe them. Certain companies have promised that "this year is different," year after year in the past, but never seemed to follow through with their promises. Do your own due diligence, and base your decisions on a company's proven track record, not on their promises of future change!

Some of the well-known planting contractors in Ontario include Haveman Brothers, Brinkman & Associates, Outland, and Moose Creek Reforestation. Some of these companies also do small amounts of other types of work (herbicide work, surveying, brushing, thinning) after their seasonal planting work is finished.

There are at least two other major planting companies in Ontario, however, I'm not going to name them because there are a lot of unflattering reviews on [reddit.com/r/treeplanting](https://www.reddit.com/r/treeplanting) about them. I'll let readers form their own opinions.

Please note that I am not including phone numbers in these listings (intentionally) because a number of these companies do not have full-time office staff, and they don't want to be flooded with calls from inexperienced planters looking for work. In order to apply, send your application via email or through a web submission form, or via regular mail.

**BRINKMAN AND ASSOCIATES** (*Alberta/BC/Ontario work*)

520 Sharpe Street, New Westminster, BC, V3M 4R2

Email: [website@brinkman.ca](mailto:website@brinkman.ca)

Web: [www.brinkman.ca](http://www.brinkman.ca)

*Brinkman also works in BC and Alberta, but I included them in the Ontario section since the company places many of their first-year planters into Ontario.*

**HAVEMAN BROTHERS FORESTRY SERVICES** (*Ontario work*)

Box 249, Kakabeka Falls, ON, P0T 1W0

Email: [info@havemanbrothers.com](mailto:info@havemanbrothers.com)

Web: [www.havemanbrothers.com](http://www.havemanbrothers.com)

**MOOSE CREEK REFORESTATION** (*Ontario work*)

Box 82, Oxdrift, ON, P0V 2J0

Email: [trees@moosecreek.ca](mailto:trees@moosecreek.ca)

Web: [www.moosecreek.ca](http://www.moosecreek.ca)

**OUTLAND REFORESTATION INC.** (*mostly Ontario work, some BC/Alberta*)

90 Eglinton Ave E., Suite 980, Toronto, ON, M4P 2Y3

Email: [outland@outland.ca](mailto:outland@outland.ca)

Web: [www.outlandplanting.ca](http://www.outlandplanting.ca)

Other former planting companies (A&M, Broland, Dorsey Contracting, PRT Frontier, Thunderhouse, Treeline, Wilderness) have either stopped doing planting projects, or have been bought out, or have ceased operations entirely. A couple of these companies now focus on other types of forestry work.

Here are some links to Provincial Employment Standards Resources:

Ministry of Labour:

[ontario.ca/page/ministry-labour-immigration-training-skills-development](http://ontario.ca/page/ministry-labour-immigration-training-skills-development)

Employment Standards Information:

[ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0](http://ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0)

Hours of Work/Overtime:

[ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0/hours-work](http://ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0/hours-work)

Minimum Wage:

[ontario.ca/page/minimum-wage](https://www.ontario.ca/page/minimum-wage)

Deductions from Wages:

[ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0/payment-wages#section-4](https://www.ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0/payment-wages#section-4)

Payments & Timing of Payroll:

[ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0/payment-wages](https://www.ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0/payment-wages)

In particular, pay attention to the following Ministry of Labour information, which applies to all employees in Ontario:

1. Workers are entitled to a minimum hourly wage throughout the province.
2. When employment ends, an employer must pay the employee all outstanding wages, including vacation pay, no later than seven days after the employment ends.

If you have questions about your wages earned during the summer, you can contact the Ministry of Labour for assistance, to ensure that your employer followed all of the provincial labour regulations. It will be very helpful for you to have daily handwritten documentation to support your case.

At the time of publication, the minimum wage in Ontario (for 2026), was \$17.60 per hour plus applicable vacation and statutory holiday pay. That will increase further on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026 (too late for the 2026 planting season). Overtime is paid out at 1.5 times the regular hourly rate (ie. \$26.55 plus applicable vacation and statutory holiday pay) for all hours exceeding 44 hours worked in a week (Sunday morning through Saturday evening). However, there is no overtime component that applies when a worker exceeds a set number of hours worked in a single day.

Ontario generally lags behind British Columbia in terms of adhering to employment standards regulations, although as I've already mentioned, there are a few Ontario companies that are actually trying to improve compliance within Ontario's industry. Your best bet, before accepting a job offer from a company, is to talk to planters who worked with the company the previous year, and make sure that they are not biased due to connections with management at that company.

Don't ever accept a position at a company that makes you pay to confirm your spot at that company! That is highly immoral, and possibly a sign that you'll have all kinds of problems with that company.

At this point, you may have decided that this doesn't paint a very pretty picture of Ontario's planting industry. Although a few companies are working hard to improve conditions, the industry generally lacks the same professionalism that is found in Western Canada. I'm aware some companies are trying to be proactive, and trying to become closer to the BC model for their operations, and also that prices also started to improve in 2020. In general, however, lower tree prices and a shorter season are the main contributing factors that explain why a lot of planters use a year in Ontario as a "stepping

stone” to get their foot in the door and gain some planting experience, then leverage that experience to get a job in western Canada the following year.

Perhaps the availability of this book will allow some Ontario companies to better understand how to improve their professionalism. It would only take a few years to turn the Ontario industry around, if company owners were interested in working together with each other and with their management teams to do that. In addition, a better educated and informed work force could help improve the industry from within. I’ve had a few people who are owners or part of management at various Ontario companies reaching out to me for advice/suggestions on how to do just that, which is a very positive sign.

This book is traditionally not as well-known throughout Ontario as it is throughout western Canada. That’s partly because crew leaders at Ontario companies generally won’t tell their planters about it, perhaps out of concern that these planters may discover the appeal of planting in BC and Alberta. If you’re a first-time tree planter working in Ontario this year, let other first-year planters in your camp know about this book after you’ve gotten to know them. It’s a resource that many will appreciate.

It is important to note that conditions in Ontario are improving, albeit slowly. Prices are still behind those in Western Canada (although with a significantly shorter season), but at least Ontario prices climbed recently, so the gap has not been widening.

The jury is still out, but it appears that positive change will continue. This is mostly due to groups of workers who have been vocal about advocating for their rights, and who are willing to speak up when they see problems. One should not judge a company based upon its promises, but rather upon past performance. It will be interesting to see in hindsight how the 2026 season turns out.

## Quebec

Quebec has a mature planting industry and a very extensive harvesting industry. In 2022, a total of 219,655 Ha were harvested throughout Quebec. This compares to 112,902 Ha harvested in BC in the same year, and makes Quebec the only province that harvests a greater land base than British Columbia. However, the amount of harvested area that is planted is significantly different. In 2022, the amount of area planted in BC represented 168% of the amount of land that was harvested (due to aggressive wildfire recovery programs), whereas in Quebec, the amount planted only represented 36% (78,515 Ha) of the amount of land harvested. The rest was left for natural regeneration.

We’ll have additional information about planting in Quebec in the 2027 edition of this book. For now, here are a couple of key points:

- Camp costs are often subsidized and much cheaper than elsewhere in Canada.
- Quebec’s labour laws and tax regulations are much different than in many other provinces.

- Quebec often has an extensive fall planting program which allows experienced French-speaking planters to work throughout most of August and September. It is generally almost impossible to get positions on these crews unless you are completely fluent in French.
- The minimum wage in Quebec for is \$16.10/hr. That will allegedly increase further on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026.

If you are Quebecois and would like to start a planting career in la belle province, here is a short list of contacts to get you started. If you ever have any updates for this list, please email me at [scooter@replant.ca](mailto:scooter@replant.ca)

### **COOPÉRATIVE FORESTIÈRE DE PETIT PARIS**

576, rue Gaudreault  
St-Ludger-de-Milot (Québec)  
G0W 2B0  
[www.cfpp.ca](http://www.cfpp.ca)

### **COOPÉRATIVE FORESTIÈRE GIRARDVILLE**

2077, rang Saint-Joseph Nord  
Girardville (Québec) G0W 1R0  
[www.epicea.org](http://www.epicea.org)

### **LA FORÊT DE DEMAIN**

200, 6<sup>ème</sup> rue ouest  
Amos (Québec) J9T 2T5  
[www.laforetdedemain.com](http://www.laforetdedemain.com)

### **LA FORESTERIE A.S.L. INC.**

803 14<sup>ième</sup> avenue  
Senneterre (Québec)  
J0Y2M0  
[www.foresterieasl.ca](http://www.foresterieasl.ca)

### **LES REBOISEURS DE LA PÉNINSULE**

355 av de Port-Royal  
Bonaventure, (QC) G0C 1E0  
[www.reboiseurs.com](http://www.reboiseurs.com)

## **The Atlantic Provinces**

A surprisingly large number of trees are planted in the Maritimes each summer, although the industry is far less mature than anywhere else in the country. Irving, which is based out of New

Brunswick, does the majority of the harvesting in the Maritimes. Irving has planting crews working just about all over the province, and also down into Nova Scotia. They even have at least one camp-based operation up near Grand Falls, in the northern half of New Brunswick.

Northern Pulp, which is based in central Nova Scotia, was another large mill, although nowhere near the size of Irving. The NS government shut down Northern Pulp in 2020 due to widespread environmental violations and a broken relationship with public stakeholders. In 2025, Bragg Forestry made a successful offer to take over their assets, which is good because Northern Pulp would have had a lot of work ahead of them before the Pictou Landing First Nation and the rest of the residents of central Nova would have trusted them. In terms of silviculture, Northern Pulp allowed a lot of their blocks to regenerate naturally, and only about 20% to 40% of their blocks were replanted in any given year. However, Northern Pulp did a lot more post-planting work (thinning and brushing) than some other companies. Between planting operations and thinning operations, they usually employed close to 200 silviculture workers in any given year. This story isn't over, and hopefully within the next 12 months we'll have a better idea of what will happen with Bragg Forestry running operations on those properties.

If you're working in the Maritimes, expect that you'll probably be working based out of your own municipal accommodations. In addition to the Irving camp mentioned above, I've heard of a few rare situations where a Canada-wide planting company has set up a planting camp in New Brunswick, but those situations are fairly rare. This sort of situation may become more common, since Irving's internal crews are not able to meet the needs of their reforestation program, and there will be more contractors working for Irving in the future. The challenge, of course, is the low pricing in the Maritimes, which makes it difficult for a contractor to survive.

For a typical planter in the Maritimes, you'll get up extremely early and meet your van at 4am or 4:30am, for the drive to the work site. Access is generally much better than in western Canada, although the drives can still be long. The work day starts and ends early, so you can expect to be done work for the day by 3pm. Although this early work day is quite common, some crews now work more conventional hours – a regular 6am-5pm schedule is also becoming more common nowadays.

Some planters use normal BushPro planting bags, while others use harness systems called Cowbells. Cowbells are a certain type of planting harness which features three "hooks" rather than silvicool bags. Cowbells are often used when planting small trays of thirty-six to sixty-four seedlings per tray. These trays are small enough to hang directly on the hooks on the harness system. These harnesses have a plastic wedge behind each of the three hooks, to prevent the trays from rubbing against the planter's body and causing chafing. These plastic wedges are the same shape as cowbells (literally bells that dairy farmers put on their cows so it's easier to find them when they've wandered off in the woods), hence the name.

I just mentioned seedling trays that can be sized to contain anywhere from 36 to 64 seedlings. There is another larger type of tray in common use, sometimes referred to as a forestry tray. These trays often hold between 220 and 300 seedlings. Since the trees are grown in the trays, and there is some mortality, the number of trees in each tray is not consistent. A nursery samples a number of trays in order to come up with an estimated number of trees per tray, and the planter gets to claim that number, regardless of what the tray actually held. For example, maybe a tray has growing space for exactly 280 jiffy-pod seedlings. And maybe a particular crop did really well, and the nursery found only six dead seedlings (on average) per tray when they audited several dozen trays. In that case, the trays would be referred to as 274-count trays.

Some nurseries in the Maritimes are also starting to use wax cardboard boxes, similar to those used in western Canada. That's a recent trend (starting in 2024) which I think will quickly become more popular in the next few years, as at least one of the major government nurseries starts to take advantage of over-wintering trees in cold storage to better serve spring planting clients. Irving is also ordering large numbers of trees in wax cardboard boxes from PRT in Ontario, because their own nurseries in Sussex and Juniper can't meet their internal demand.

A lot of planting in the Maritimes used to be characterized by practices that planters from other provinces found to be very strange. In many places, the entire crew worked together in one piece. A pacer (crew leader) would line the crew up, and they'd sweep across the block together in a wave pattern, with the crew leader making sure that spacing was correct. That practice is almost extinct now, thankfully, which means that planters will usually be assigned pieces of their own. Another unique aspect of planting in the Maritimes was that for a long time, the use of potapuki tools was common. A potapuki, sometimes referred to as a "gun," is a tool with a long tube that the seedling slides down. A planter would kick the sharp end of the gun into the soil, slide a seedling down the tube, and then pull the gun away once the seedling was in the hole. In recent years, most crews are starting to use normal D-handle shovels (or staves) instead of potapukis. Irving may still use potapukis in some locations, but all other planting companies use shovels.

The planting season is relatively short at some companies, perhaps only two months. A few companies, however, sometimes offer at least five months of planting (Ravenwood). Of course, this varies a lot from place to place, since crews are usually relatively local to an area, so when the planting is done in that area, the season is over. However, some areas have a separate Fall plant, which can prove to be advantageous for people looking to extend their season. The Fall plant is not suited for students, and the blocks can be quite green at this time of year, but it does offer a new window of opportunity. Here is some feedback from a friend of mine who was a planter for Scott & Stewart in Nova Scotia in 2020: "The fall plant is basically the same as their summer plant. Same prices (7-8 cents), greener blocks, but there's also some really nice prepped land. Usually eight to nine hours of work per day including drive time, but the drives aren't very long compared to BC. And it is work from home. The season usually starts near the end of August and runs until late October." It's best to ask a prospective employer when their season will start and finish.

Red spruce is the species that is planted most commonly throughout the Maritimes, with some black spruce, white spruce, balsam fir and Jack pine too. The planting of Eastern white pine seedlings is increasing, but only on reclamation and environmental projects rather than within the commercial sector.

Ticks are a problem in southwestern parts of Nova Scotia. Traditionally, there was a “tick line” that basically started around Truro. Anything to the south of Truro was a problem, and the number of ticks got exponentially worse as you get further to the southwest. The Chignecto Isthmus (ie. Debert up to the NB border) and the eastern parts of the province seemed to be relatively clean, although that already seems to be changing due to warmer temperatures associated with climate change. For the last few years, it seems that ticks are fairly common anywhere in mainland Nova Scotia and southern New Brunswick. Climate Change sucks.

In terms of tick species, American Dog ticks (referred to just as “dog ticks”) are common. These are fairly large ticks. Blacklegged ticks (referred to as “deer ticks”) are much smaller and also common. Blacklegged/deer ticks are especially dangerous as they’re the ones that carry lyme, and it’s possible to run into these insects on a daily basis. It’s a serious problem. If you’re working in mainland Nova Scotia or southern New Brunswick, do tick checks before you leave the block, change your clothing, and put the clothing in bins or bags that stay outside the interior of the vehicle. Learn more about ticks and lyme at [www.replant.ca/ticks](http://www.replant.ca/ticks)

Tree prices in the Maritimes have traditionally been the lowest in the country. A lot of planters do a year or two in the Maritimes, then realize that they should migrate westward to make better money (with mixed success, as planting expectations are different). Over the past few years, some silviculture contractors have been trying to take steps to combat this drain of talent, through slightly higher prices, and also by changing tools and planting methods to match planting procedures in other provinces. Irving continues to offer a lot of planting, but they still struggle to find planters. They implemented a major price hike in 2024, from 9 cents to 12 cents per tree, which was quite an eye-opener. For someone from the Maritimes who wants to try planting for the first time, and doesn’t want to take the risk of travelling across the country for work, Irving is an easy option with lots of positions available.

I’m not aware of much commercial reforestation work in Prince Edward Island, but there’s a small amount. The province only plants slightly over 1 million trees per year, according to statistics that I saw for 2021. Ninety percent of the Island is privately owned land.

Newfoundland does have some tree planting work. Newfoundland relies more heavily on aerial seeding and natural regeneration than many other jurisdictions. In 2008, the Western Star featured an article about planting in which they claimed, “Those hired as crew supervisors will make \$120 per day throughout their employment, which is expected to last for ten weeks.” That doesn’t sound very appealing, in my opinion. I believe that the situation has changed somewhat since there. I saw an article from 2013 that suggested that the provincial planting program that year would target about

3000 Ha (about five million trees), and that the season ran from around May 21<sup>st</sup> into late September, with a very small workforce. There were major wildfires in the province totalling 23,886 hectares in 2022 (compared to 341 Ha burned in 2021) and it sounds like planting is ramping up slowly each year. But prices will probably be low, similar to the rest of the Maritimes, and all of the work will probably be done by several dozen seasonal workers who reside within the province. Cornerbrook Pulp & Paper is the main harvesting operation. One forester that I spoke with suggested that approximately 20% of what is cut gets replanted, and natural regen takes care of the rest. Balsam fir regen is very effective at replacing what is harvested, which is good because balsam is very difficult to grow in nurseries due to low germination rates. Black spruce generally gets planted, as natural regen is weak. There are only small scattered pockets of white and red pine, so those are not harvested (or planted) widely. The provincial nursery at Wooddale currently only grows approximately seven million trees per year. Still, that number is higher than a decade ago. That nursery also grows several million vegetable transplants each year to help commercial farmers within the province.

Effective April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026, the minimum wages in the Atlantic provinces were supposed to be as follows:

New Brunswick: \$16.00/hr estimated, based upon CPI

Nova Scotia: \$16.75/hr

Newfoundland: \$16.32/hr estimated, based on CPI

Prince Edward Island: \$17.00/hr

Some of these provinces may see additional increases in October (especially Nova Scotia), although the general trend is to set new rates on April 1<sup>st</sup> annually.

Interestingly, an examination of the provincial labour standards for Nova Scotia indicates that if a person working in forestry operations (which would include tree planting) is paid according to a piece-rate compensation system, and does not earn the equivalent of minimum wage for their piece-rate earnings, then minimum wage must be paid. There does not appear to be any clarity about whether this applies to each day individually, or to each pay period as a whole. It appears that legislation is similar in the other provinces. It's possible that a group of planters or planting company owners could get together and use this legislation as leverage to seek fair increases in piece-rate wages in these provinces.

The best tree prices that I've heard of in the Maritimes have been at some small private contractors who are trying to change the industry, hoping to eventually build a professional model similar to that seen in Ontario and western Canada.

If you're looking for a planting company in Nova Scotia, you can try contacting Trevor Schmidt at Bushwackers Forestry (experienced planters only). I've worked with Trevor extensively in the past, and Bushwackers has built a good reputation over the past couple of years thanks to the hard work that he and Laura have been putting in. For the 2026 season, they're promising a base price of 15

cents with accommodations and transportation included. Their spring season will run from mid-April until the end of June, and their Fall season will be almost two months long in September/October. They don't hire people directly for brush saw work, but they can point people in the right direction to reputable contractors. Trevor's email is [trevor\\_schmidt@live.com](mailto:trevor_schmidt@live.com) (underscore between first and last name) and their website is [www.bushwhackersforestry.ca](http://www.bushwhackersforestry.ca)

Another company (based out of Cape Breton) is Farquhar Reforestation. They're small and only started planting around 2023, but I've talked to the owner (Isaac) and he seems to be paying the best prices that I've seen in Nova Scotia, advertised at probably around 14 cents for work in Cape Breton. They also have saw work. I'm not aware of a website for Farquhar. There's also Ryan Scott at Scott & Stewart Forestry, based in Antigonish. The drawback with Scott & Stewart is that their prices are reputed to be quite a bit lower than Farquhar. I checked their website in late January 2026, and they were advertising 10 cents/tree, although that information might have been stale.

If you're looking for a planting company in New Brunswick, you could try contacting any of these companies:

Ravenwood Silviculture (Mikhel Peters), based out of Sackville: [ravenwood.nb@outlook.com](mailto:ravenwood.nb@outlook.com)

East Winds Silviculture (Marc-Daniel Rehberg), based out of Fredericton: [mdrrehberg@gmail.com](mailto:mdrrehberg@gmail.com)

Goat River Contracting, based out of Utopia/Saint John. No contact info yet.

I've worked extensively with Ravenwood's owner and some of his crews for the past several years, and I would highly recommend them for anyone who wants to do tree planting work out of the central Maritimes. Ravenwood is advertising a minimum of 13.0 cents/tree in 2026, and higher prices (14.0 to 16.0 and up) for some of the more challenging blocks. Vacation pay (4%) is paid on top of the tree price. They also have a very long season, from mid-April until the start of October, with crews operating in multiple locations. Many of their planters work out of their own homes, and Ravenwood does not offer a camp per se (some planters opt to stay at nearby campgrounds). Ravenwood also seems to have quite a few returning experienced planters, which is always a good sign. Their website is [www.ravenwoodsilviculture.com](http://www.ravenwoodsilviculture.com)

I am not nearly as familiar with East Winds, but Marc-Daniel has worked extensively in western Canada and has a lot of experience. East Winds does have a bush camp, however, I've seen several online comments about the camp being quite rudimentary. Be prepared for just the most basic of amenities rather than comfort. The planting industry on the east coast is certainly not as developed as the west coast. East Winds does not appear to have a website.

I don't have much info about Goat River Contracting yet, as 2026 appears to be their first year of operations. I believe they have approximately 1.5 million trees to plant as a sub-contractor for Irving (1 million spring and 500k Fall), and they are running a small operation out of a bush camp (standard camp costs at \$25/day). The company is being run by Colin Daye, who spend a few decades working in BC before setting up this company in New Brunswick.

Incidentally, when an employer in Nova Scotia provides board and lodging for employees, they are not allowed to charge the employee more than \$10.80 per day. This may be one of the reasons why camp operations are not common on the east coast, as the companies would have to subsidize daily operations much more heavily than where higher camp costs are charged to employees in Ontario and on the west coast.

## Planting Outside Canada

If you're interested in planting in countries outside Canada, there is a limited amount of information that has been posted on the Replant.ca message board by various users. To learn more, visit:

[www.replant.ca/plantingabroad](http://www.replant.ca/plantingabroad)

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

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