

Good nursery practices depend on you

The nursery is the foundation for tree planting success, whether for reforestation or for agroforestry. The quality of the trees you produce will greatly influence the livelihood of the people who plant them. Trees improve our soil, clean our water and air, provide us with fruit, fire wood and timber, and are home to many animals. Your trees are important!

Just as you give your children a good start in life by nurturing them and responding to their needs by feeding them healthy foods, you must give your trees special early care. Proper shade and water, fertilizer amendments, and strict quality guidelines do not mean that the plants are being pampered in ‘luxurious conditions’. On the contrary, when given proper light, water and nutrients, vigorous, healthy plants will result. They will be better prepared to grow and survive in the harsh conditions of the ‘real world’. Your work is important!

By using these good nursery practices, your trees and your customers will appreciate it:

- make plant quality, not plant quantity, your most important objective
- collect seed from several of the best trees in the region
- assess your stock regularly and cull poor quality plants
- sow the seed directly whenever possible
- make sure the roots are straight down when pricking out
- prepare and use compost from different organic materials
- use small volume containers
- regulate the amount of water and light as the plants develop
- water slowly with a low pressure hose, and ensure the substrate is well wetted
- water all the trees, especially along the edges and at the ends of rows
- look for nutrient deficiencies and correct them with fertilizer or a better substrate
- weed frequently
- always use safety precautions when applying chemicals
- visit other nurseries and outplanting sites, exchange ideas, and experiment with different techniques.