



# THE BUCKET METHOD

## Watering Guidelines for Newly Planted Trees

Trees love water! So much so that from May to August every tree needs 30 gallons of water every week. From September to mid-October, every tree needs 30 gallons of water every two weeks.

### Why the Bucket Method?

- It conserves water.
- It offers an easy way to measure how much water trees are receiving.
- It is efficient for trees that are within reach of a garden hose and planted fairly close together—the way we like them! (see sidebar)
- It reuses your school's five-gallon buckets from floor cleaners etc.
- There is no cost to the green team since the pails are readily available.
- The technology is simple.
- Students can adopt this practice as part of their tree stewardship program.
- The system is simple, fun for students and can easily be taken on by clubs or classes.
- It offers a teachable opportunity to discuss water conservation and tree stewardship.

### Where can you get your buckets?

Ask your school's caretaker to save empty five-gallon containers from cleaning products. Be sure to clean the containers thoroughly before you use them. You will need one five-gallon pail for each tree. Have someone drill two quarter-inch holes in the bottom of the pails to allow for slow flow.

### A Note About the Watering Guidelines

Trees must be watered throughout the summer. When students come back to school in September, continue this practice through to mid-October. This will ensure the trees have enough water going into the harsh winter months.

Evolution did not intend trees to grow singly. Far more than ourselves they are social creatures, and no more natural as isolated specimens than man is as a marooned sailor or hermit.

— John Fowles





Someone's sitting  
in the shade today  
because someone  
planted a tree  
a long time ago.

— Warren Buffett



## How does the Bucket Method work?

1. For a grove of six trees, start with six buckets.
2. Place one bucket at the drip line of each tree.
3. Fill each pail with water using a hose. It will take about four minutes to fill the pail with a regular garden hose (water will leak out the bottom as the pail is filling up).
4. It takes three minutes for the pail to empty, so over the course of seven minutes (four minutes to fill plus three to empty) ten to eleven gallons of water percolates slowly into the soil (there should be very little runoff).
5. Continue to fill all the buckets one at a time.
6. When you have finished filling the last bucket, return to the first tree and move the first pail one-third of the way around the same tree and fill it up again. Repeat with the other buckets and the other trees.
7. Repeat the process for a third time, moving the pails another one-third of the way around the trees and filling them up one final time. You should fill each tree's pail three times in total so that the tree will receive approximately 30 gallons of water.
8. If water starts to run all over the ground rather than sinking in, you know the soil is saturated and you are done.
9. Do this weekly from May–August and every two weeks September to mid-October.

## While you're watering, you might want to sing!

Students enjoy singing the song *There's a Hole in My Bucket* while watering the trees. Sometimes they've been known to spontaneously create their own lyrics!

Henry: There's a hole in my bucket dear Liza, dear Liza, There's a hole in my bucket dear Liza, a hole.

Liza: Well, fix it dear Henry, dear Henry, dear Henry, Well, fix it dear Henry, dear Henry, fix it.

Henry: With what shall I fix it ...

Liza: With a straw dear Henry ...

Henry: The straw is too long ...

Liza: Well, cut it dear Henry ...

Henry: With what shall I cut it ...

Liza: With an axe dear Henry ...

Henry: The axe is too dull dear Liza ...

Liza: Well, sharpen it dear Henry ...

Henry: With what shall I sharpen it ...

Liza: With a stone dear Henry ...

Henry: The stone is too dry dear Liza ...

Liza: Well, wet it dear Henry ...

Henry: With what shall I wet it ...

Liza: With water dear Henry ...

Henry: In what shall I fetch it ...

Liza: In a bucket dear Henry ...

Henry: There's a hole in my bucket, dear Liza ...