

# Connecting Kids to Nature

Engage children in learning about the environment and the world around them with this hands-on activity from Project Learning Tree® - it's fun and educational!

## Reduce Your Utility Costs with i-Tree

Did you know you can reduce heating and cooling costs by strategically planting trees around your home? In this activity you will use **i-Tree Design** - a free online tool by the US Forest Service - to determine where to plant trees for maximum energy savings.

Go outside with your family and create a quick sketch of the perimeter of your home or building where you live. Identify a few spots where you could plant trees and mark them on the sketch (see Figure 1).

Back inside, go to <https://design.itreetools.org/>, input your address and press "Go!"

When asked, "Would you like to calculate the impact of trees on your cooling and heating utility bill?", click "Yes." "Draw" the building structure using the online tool by following the instruction on how to outline the perimeter of your home.

Next, select "Plant Trees". As you input information about the tree you'd like to plant, you'll see bands around your home, colored according to the potential energy savings provided by the tree. Hover over each zone to see the energy benefit information displayed below the map.

Next virtually plant the tree by "placing" it on the map as instructed (remember to change tree species and circumference for each new tree). Ask your children to select the spots they previously identified on the blueprint, as well as those that i-Tree shows to provide maximum benefit.

Once all the trees have been "virtually planted," calculate the monetary and environmental benefits of each tree by selecting "Estimate Benefits" and entering the number of years for which you would like to calculate benefits into the future (e.g., 25 years) and register it in the chart below.

### Utilities Savings Chart

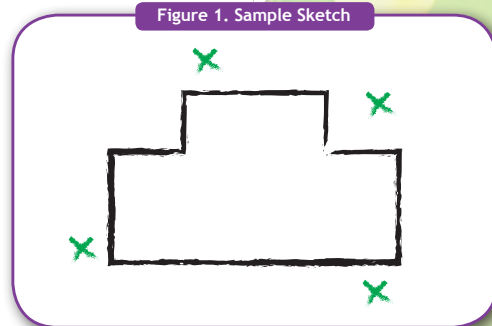
Common Tree Name	Circumference	Where we will plant it	Savings (\$)

#### Encourage Your Child's School to Incorporate Environmental Education

For more activity ideas and materials:

- Attend a PLT workshop, [www.plt.org/state-network/](http://www.plt.org/state-network/)
- Visit [shop.plt.org](http://shop.plt.org)

Figure 1. Sample Sketch



Hint! Know the best species to plant around your home by completing the activity "What Tree Should I Plant?" available from [www.plt.org](http://www.plt.org).



[www.plt.org](http://www.plt.org)