



The Magic and Mystery of Trees

By Jen Green

Trees and the Planet



Trees are vital to every single person on the planet. They keep the Earth cool and moist, which makes it a nice place to live. Trees love to soak up water – but don't worry, they are willing to share it with the rest of us. They even help create the clouds. This process is called the water cycle.



The Water Cycle

Water moves between the sea, air and land in a non-stop cycle called the water cycle. Trees play a very important part in this. By releasing rainwater back into the air, and absorbing water through their roots, they stop rain from flowing straight back into the sea.





Evaporation
Water rises
from the ocean
as a gas called
water vapour.

Condensation

Evaporation

Precipitation



Condensation
High in the air,
the water vapour
from the trees
forms into clouds.

Collection



Precipitation
when clouds float
over high areas such
as mountains, water
falls as rain or snow.



Condensation

Evaporation

Precipitation

Collection

Leaves catch rain
and give off extra
moisture the tree
doesn't need as
water vapour.



Collection

The water flows back down towards lower ground.



Collection

Any rain that the trees don't absorb soaks into the soil or runs off into rivers.



Forests help to cool the air around the Earth. The planet is already warmer than it should be, but without trees it would heat up even more.



Trees at Risk



All over the world, people are cutting down trees or use the land beneath forests. Slowly but surely, even vast forests like the Amazon are getting smaller. We also harm trees by spreading pollution. We need to take more care of our precious forests.



Why are Forests Disappearing?



People cut down trees for timber and also to light wood fires to keep warm and to cook. We clear forest land to build new roads and cities, and to make way for new farms and ranches, where we raise cattle and grow crops.



Lost Homes



When the loggers move in, the whine of chainsaws fills the air. Mighty trees come crashing down. Logs are loaded onto trucks. In the end, all that is left are broken stumps. Animals such as birds and deer run for their lives and are left with nowhere to live. This is called habitat destruction.



Effects



Tree roots keep the soil together. Without trees to slow down and suck up the rain, it washes forest soil into rivers.

Eventually, the whole area becomes drier, so farmers find it harder to grow crops.



Pollution

Cars, factories and power plants in faraway cities can harm trees. They give off smoke and fumes that drift on the wind to pollute distant forests. The pollution makes trees drop their leaves, so they get sick and eventually die.



Helping Trees



Trees deserve our love and care. After all, they do a lot to keep our world healthy. In turn, it's up to all of us to take better care of the world's trees. We can use recycled paper, or even plant a tree.



Plant a Tree

Make space in your garden, park, or other open space for a brand-new tree. Buy a young tree (sapling) and make a home for it to grow.



Sapling

Step One: Dig

Dig a deep hole in the ground. Make sure the hole is twice as wide as the roots of the tree and the same depth. Different trees like different soil, but most like loose, moist ground where their roots can grow.



Step Two: Plant

Plant a sapling that you have bought from a garden centre.

Put a piece of wood across the soil around the top of the tree's roots. This will show you where the roots come up to. They should be just at ground level.



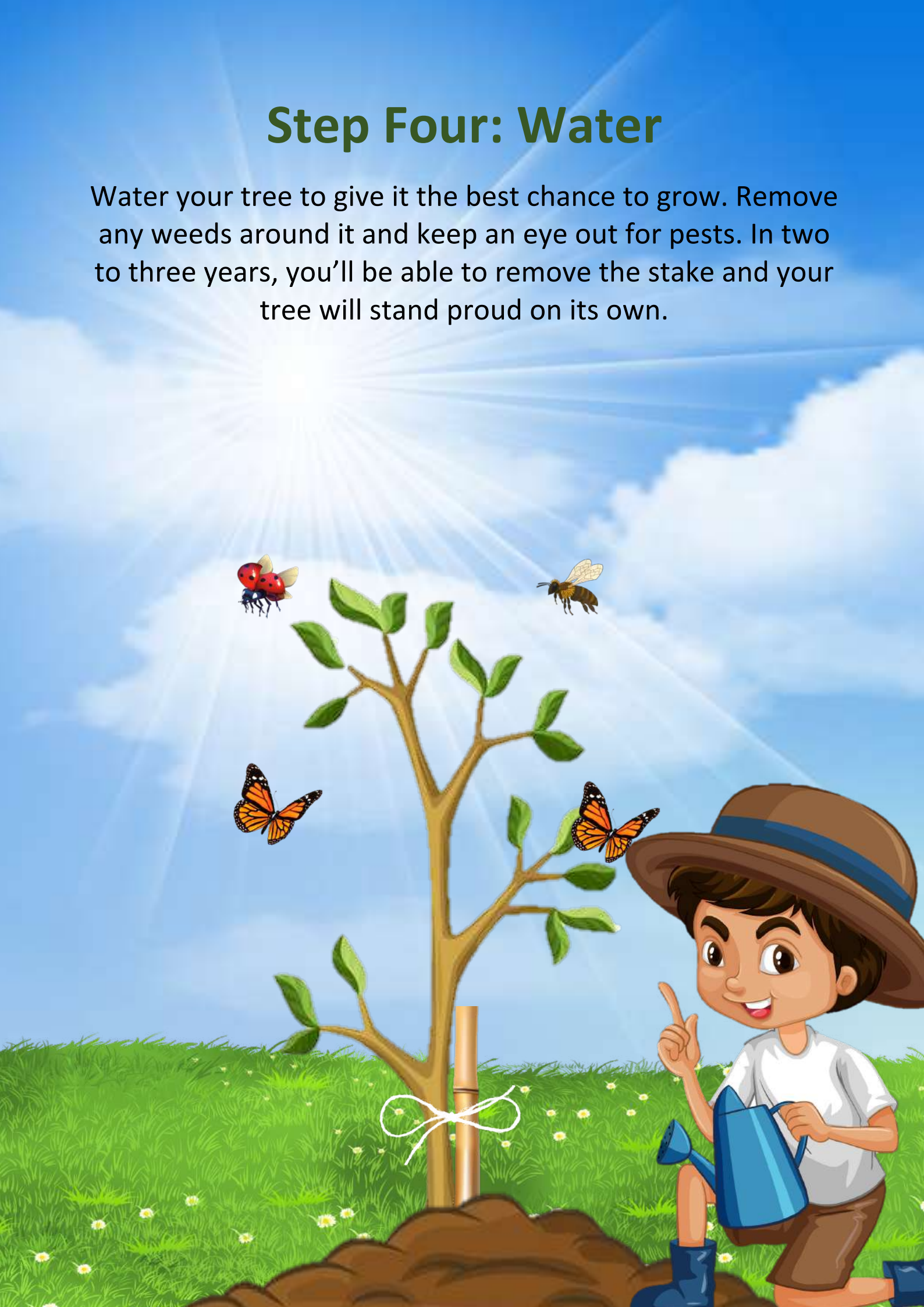
Step Three: Fill

Shovel earth into the hole, making sure it is not packed in too tightly. The sapling's roots should be completely covered but with room to grow. Tie the tree to a stake to help it stand up in the wind.



Step Four: Water

Water your tree to give it the best chance to grow. Remove any weeds around it and keep an eye out for pests. In two to three years, you'll be able to remove the stake and your tree will stand proud on its own.



Some forests, such as national parks and reserves, are protected. Workers called foresters look after the trees and plant new ones when needed.





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