



# Tree Giveaway Care Guide

1821–2021  
**MADE**  
by McGill





# About the McGill Tree Giving Initiative

McGill's Bicentennial milestone is a significant occasion to highlight the importance of collaboration and innovation in sustainability, locally and beyond. This September, McGill University is hosting the **Sustainable Futures Festival**, a week-long series of events that invites the McGill community, as well as partners and guests, to envision a collective future.

As part of the Sustainable Futures Festival, McGill is giving away free plum trees to schools across Montreal, to build interest in trees and plants and to encourage learning about the important roles of plants in capturing carbon from the air, producing oxygen that we breathe, and providing us with

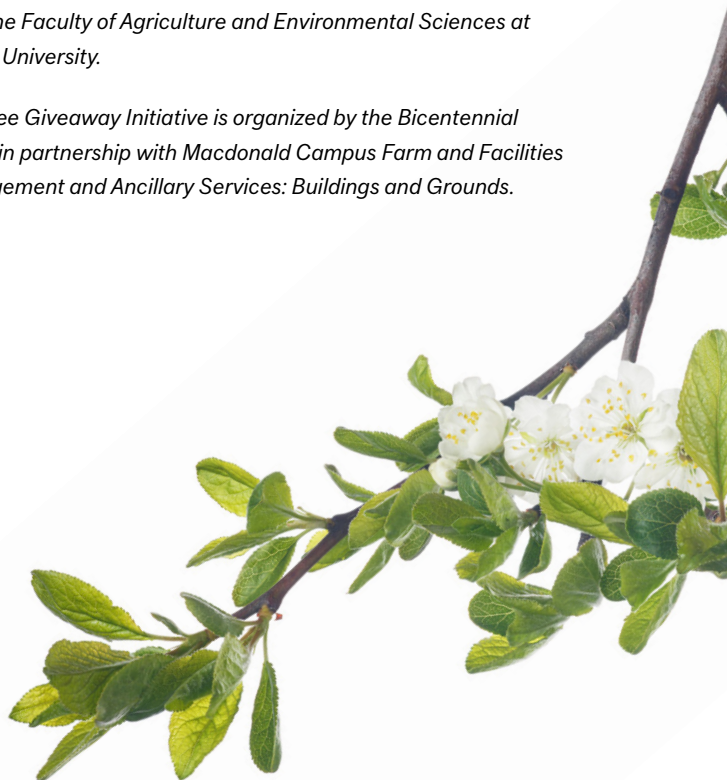
nutritious food. Trees also play an important role in our urban environment by providing shade and a habitat for beneficial insects and pollinators. This is an opportunity for schools to launch their new year in a positive light with new growth and to engage their students in learning and caring for their tree(s). This guide will help you learn about the Mount Royal European plum tree and ensure it has a long, healthy, and fruitful life.

Thank you for being a part of our Bicentennial!

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*This guide was produced by the Bicentennial Office with guidance from the Faculty of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at McGill University.*

*The Tree Giveaway Initiative is organized by the Bicentennial Office in partnership with Macdonald Campus Farm and Facilities Management and Ancillary Services: Buildings and Grounds.*





# Trees and sustainability

To work as we need it to, the Earth needs us to take care of her. We need natural resources like water, air, plants, and fossil fuels to be able to do all the things we do each day--eat, go to school, move around, run technology, and more. But we only have so much of these resources. To protect our future, we have to make sure we don't run out of them. To be sustainable is to use what we have in a way that makes it last.

Planting trees helps us create a sustainable future. For example, trees remove carbon dioxide, a gas that contributes to climate change, from the air. This makes our air cleaner and safer for longer. In cities, the shade from trees can help to reduce the cost of cooling our buildings.

They can even help us save water! When it rains and there are lots of trees around, they save the water from going into waste treatment facilities, which costs lots of time and energy. Water from these is released back into the atmosphere and ground at a slower, healthier rate: this can help prevent floods. During this process, water is even filtered naturally.

# Meet the Mount Royal European plum tree!

These fruiting trees originate from Europe but are commonly found around North America. Their bright green leaves are accompanied in the spring by beautiful, fragrant flowers before the late summer or early fall fruiting period.

Though the amount of fruit you can expect to receive each season can vary greatly and you will have to wait up to 3-4 years for the annual fruit production to begin, you can expect to one day see delicious dark blue plums hanging from your tree.

When you receive your *prunus domestica*, it will stand about 30-60 cm in height. However, under proper conditions it can grow up to 60 cm a year to finally reach a height of 3-4 meters.

## *Fun facts*

- The first European plum tree originated around 2,000 years ago by the Caspian Sea.
- While your plum tree will grow dark blue fruit, other kinds of plums can be yellow, red, purple, green, and black!
- Prunes are made from European plums.
- While most plum trees need to be planted with another of the same kind to bear fruit, the Mount Royal plum is self-pollinating.



# Planting and taking care of your new tree

Before planting your tree, you'll need to make sure you pick the right location.

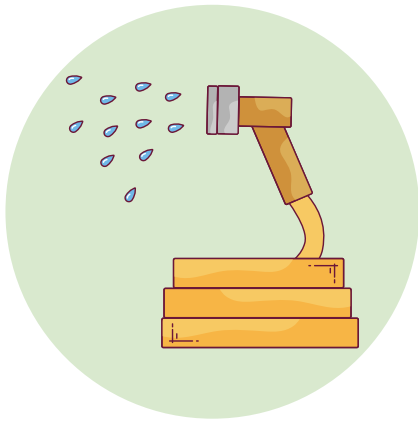
**These plum trees thrive in full sun in average, medium moisture, well-drained soils.**

- The area where you plant your tree should be able to receive at least 6 to 8 hours of direct sun a day.
- To check if the soil where you'd like to plant your tree is well drained, try digging a hole 30 cm in diameter and 30 cm deep on a day where it is not raining. Fill the hole with water and observe: If the soil is well drained, the water will flow through into the ground very quickly, usually within a few minutes. If it is poorly drained, it will take closer to an hour.

Once you're ready to begin, follow these steps:

- Remove your tree from its pot and carefully untangle the roots using your fingers. Be careful not to damage them by pulling too hard.
- Dig a hole that will allow your tree to be covered with soil once planted. Place it in the middle of the hole and water thoroughly before and after covering it with soil.





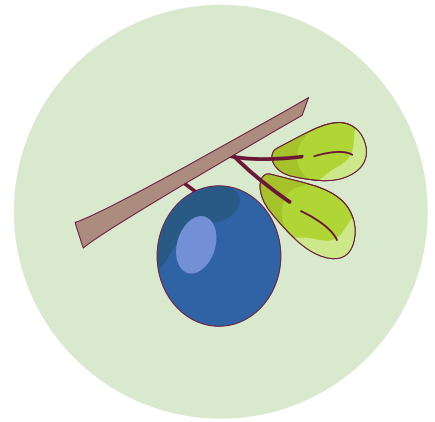
## Watering

- For the tree's first season, make sure to water the tree every one to two weeks. After that, water when the soil is nearly dry.
- When watering, let your hose soak the soil surrounding the tree for around five minutes.



## Pruning

- Pruning is a process that promotes healthy growth. While plum trees require minimal pruning, doing so on a yearly basis will be hugely beneficial.
- Always remove dead or dying branches
- As the tree grows remove any branches that are too low to the ground or that interfere with grass cutting/ landscaping



## Harvesting

- The plums you will eventually be able to harvest from your tree should be left to ripen until the skin of the fruit feels soft. They will remain at around the same level of ripeness once picked from the tree, so make sure to try a plum and ensure it's ready before you pick all of your fruit.

## Other tips

- During the winter, especially when the tree is young, it is recommended that you use a tree wrap for protection.
- Make sure to keep an eye out for pests surrounding your tree and contact a specialist if removal is needed.



# Try this experiment

See how trees absorb water.

## Materials

- Leaves
- Scissors
- Clear cups
- Water
- Red food coloring
- Magnifying glass (optional)

## Procedure

1. Start by taking a walk outdoors and collecting various leaves.
2. Snip off the bottom of each leaf stem. Then place each leaf in a glass filled about a third of the way with water.
3. Add red food coloring to the water. (Make the water a very dark shade of red to increase your chances of seeing changes in the leaves.)
4. Observe the leaves closely. (You can use a magnifying glass if you have one.) Record your observations of how they look on Day 1 of the experiment.
5. Observe them for the next two days.

## What's going on?

You should notice the red color move slowly through the leaf.

The colored water was moving through the xylem tubes of the leaf. The **xylem tubes** of plants transport water and minerals up from the roots through the entire plant. The water then evaporates at the leaf surface. The thick walls of the xylem tubes also provide support for the plant.

*Experiment borrowed from [buggyandbuddy.com/science-kids-exploring-leaves/](http://buggyandbuddy.com/science-kids-exploring-leaves/)*



# Tree Guide Sources

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