



# THE ENVIRONMENTALIST Magazine

*Free online subscriptions*

[www.the-environmentalist.org](http://www.the-environmentalist.org)

[www.the-environmentalist.org](http://www.the-environmentalist.org)

# LIFE STYLE ON THE ENVIRONMENTALIST

## How to Plant a Christmas Tree

AnswerTips-Enabled

by William S. Becker



Tip O'Neil, former Speaker of the House of Representatives, once declared that "all politics is local". The same might be said for climate change. While its consequences are global, its root cause is the greenhouse gas emissions each of us emits directly or indirectly from our vehicles, buildings and appliances.

If anthropogenic climate change is the result of the millions of energy decisions each of us makes in the course of our lives, then it stands to reason that the solution to climate change lies in making those decisions differently. Each of us must sign a treaty with ourselves, a personal Kyoto Protocol. Without that individual commitment, no international agreement to mitigate global warming will be worth the recycled paper it's written on.

This point came home recently when I met a woman named Clare Dakin in London. Clare is the UK's representative for a program called Project Green Hands. Its objective is to reverse the desertification of Tamil Nadu, the seventh most populous state in India, by planting 114 million trees within the next 10 years.

So far, six million trees have been planted by 1 million people in three years, including 850,000 in a single day, a Guinness Book world record. The people who plant the trees are volunteers who each pledge to care for a single sapling for two years.

Clare is evangelical about this work. "The project is rare in its beauty, its wisdom, its depth of understanding of people and nature and its immediacy, logic and global significance," she says. "It is afforestation on barren farmland...to tackle water scarcity, soil erosion and community rehabilitation through mass education around sustainability and mass participation in planting and tending."



So far, Clare says, 1,000 villages have joined the project. The goal is to increase tree cover in Tamil Nadu from 17 percent to 30 percent or more - and to do it in a way that can be replicated in other parts of the world.

Other parts of the world aren't waiting. Project Green Hands is being replicated globally by the [Plant for the Planet: Billion Trees Campaign](#), launched by Wangari Maathai, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 for her work promoting tree planting in the [Green Belt Movement](#). The billion-trees effort is coordinated by the [United Nations Environment Programme \(UNEP\)](#). Its goal is to plant 7 billion trees by the end of 2009. More than 2.6 billion trees already have been planted and 4.2 billion more have been pledged.

"Globally, forest cover is at least one-third less than what it once was," says Achim Steiner, executive director of UNEP. "We need to plant trees and in doing so send a signal to the corridors of political power across the globe that the watching and waiting is over - that countering climate change can take root via one billion small but significant acts in our gardens, parks, countryside and rural areas."

Tree planting should be a priority in the United States, too, where extreme weather, drought, insects and wildfires are destroying millions of acres of forest land vital not only to carbon sequestration, but to wildlife, recreation and other important ecological services. One of the

organizations working to replant these areas is [American Forests](#).

All three organizations need and accept donations of money, but also of time. You'll find instructions for giving both at the web sites linked from this post.

If you're in the giving mood this holiday season, consider trees. Plant them yourself, empower others to do so, or both. When it comes to climate change, every tree you help plant is a gift to the planet and to your children.

-----

*William S. Becker is the Executive Director of the Presidential Climate Action Plan (PCAP), a project of the University of Colorado, Wirth Chair, charged with producing a 100 day action plan on climate change for the next President of the United States, and the author of [THE 100 DAY ACTION PLAN TO SAVE THE PLANET](#), available in eBook format from St. Martins Griffin.*

Labels: [American Forests](#), [Bill Becker](#), [Climate Change](#), [Environment](#), [Flora](#), [Green Belt Movement](#), [Global Warming](#), [India](#), [PCAP](#), [Project Green Hands](#), [UNEP](#)

Posted by The Environmentalist at 8:41 AM

[Email this](#) • [Add to del.icio.us](#) • [Digg This!](#) (2 Diggs) • [Share on Facebook](#) • [Discuss on Newsvine](#) • [Stumble It!](#) • [View CC license](#) •

[AddThis!](#)