



DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESSFUL TREE PLANTING AND FOREST RESTORATION IN MALAWI

1. **PROTECT EXISTING FORESTS FIRST:** Keeping forests in their original state is always preferable; undamaged old forests soak up carbon better and are more resilient to fire, storm and droughts.
2. **USE NATURAL FOREST REGROWTH WHEREVER POSSIBLE:** Letting trees grow back naturally with limited assistance (and protection) is often cheaper, more efficient and more effective than planting trees.
3. **SELECT THE RIGHT AREA FOR REFORESTATION:** Plant trees in areas that were historically forested but have become degraded, rather than planting trees in other natural habitats (such as grasslands, wetlands, etc.). And strategically plant elsewhere for specific purposes (e.g., soil fertility on farm, fruit on farm/homestead, wind breaks, stream bank protection, etc.).
4. **SELECT THE RIGHT TREE SPECIES FOR THE RIGHT LOCATION:** Where tree planting is needed, picking the right trees is crucial. Scientists advise a mixture of tree species naturally found in the local area, including some rare species and trees of economic importance, but avoiding trees that might become invasive.
5. **MAKE SURE THE TREES ARE RESILIENT TO A CHANGING CLIMATE:** Use tree seeds/seedlings that are suitable for the local climate and how that may be expected to change in the future.
6. **MAKE TREE-PLANTING DEMAND-DRIVEN:** Local stakeholders must drive and own tree planting efforts. It is often local people who have most to gain from looking after the trees planted in the future (and similarly, it is local people who are at greatest risk from unwanted tree planting)
7. **PLAN AHEAD:** Plan well in advance to ensure you can source seeds, sow seeds, establish nurseries, prepare transplanting pits and outplant trees early in the rainy season (see DoF Forestry Calendar for recommendations). But first, work with local people to define the planting/reforestation goals, confirm the timeline, management requirements, and roles and responsibilities. Lastly, plan to plant only what you can manage (to reduce waste).
8. **PLAN AND COMMIT FOR THE LONG-TERM:** Tree planting is not a one-off-event, it is a long-term commitment that may require 5, 10 or 20 years to “pay-off”. Ensuring that planted trees are well managed, survive, and are able to deliver the desired products/services requires a long-term commitment.
9. **LEARN BY DOING:** Combine scientific knowledge with local knowledge. Ideally, small-scale trials should take place before planting large numbers of trees. Monitor, learn, adapt, then scale-up where and when feasible.
10. **MAKE TREE PLANTING PAY (AND MAKE IT PAY OVER-TIME):** The long-term success of tree planting depends to a large extent on the ability of the tree planting effort to provide multiple benefits to key stakeholders (and especially local stakeholders), over time. This can include livelihood (non-monetary) benefits and monetary benefits. Generally, speaking stakeholders must value these benefits over changing the landuse (e.g., from forest to agriculture).

Adapted from Briggs, H. (January 26, 2021). “Scientists address myths over large-scale tree planting,” BBC. Available:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-55795816>