

# EDUCATING YOUTH



## ABOUT THE NATURAL WORLD AND SUSTAINABILITY

## FORESTS AS A LENS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

**The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) Inc. is a sustainability leader that stands for future forests. Project Learning Tree (PLT), an initiative of SFI, is an award-winning environmental education program designed for teachers and other educators, parents, and community leaders working with youth from preschool through grade 12.**

### **PLT AND SFI: A NATURAL FIT**

PLT uses forests as a lens to develop students' awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of the environment, to build their skills and ability to make informed decisions, and to encourage them to take personal responsibility for sustaining the environment and our quality of life that depends on it.

Started in 1976, PLT provides educators with high-quality professional development, hands-on activities, and multi-disciplinary supplemental curriculum that can be easily integrated into lesson plans for all grades and subject areas to help teach youth about trees, forests, and the environment.

In 2017, PLT became an initiative of SFI. SFI has a deep commitment to youth, education and community engagement. This relationship offers an exciting opportunity to combine our considerable networks and expand our efforts to get youth outdoors and into forests in ways that inspire them to become environmental stewards and future forest leaders, and to introduce them to green careers.

SFI is committed to continuing PLT's work as a high-quality education program. Together, we are helping youth understand and appreciate the value of well-managed forests and their important environmental benefits, such as cleaning our air and water. We do this by teaching youth how to think, not what to think, about forests and other complex environmental issues through hands-on, minds-on activities that develop students' critical-thinking and problem-solving skills.

## GETTING OUTDOORS AND GETTING ACTIVE

Experiencing nature through forests at an early age can help build a solid foundation for a healthy lifestyle focused on the outdoors. The majority of PLT lessons take teachers and students outside. But around the world, rising rates of urbanization are disconnecting youth from nature. That is why SFI is actively focused on getting youth outdoors. We are also strengthening our connections to diverse, urban, and underserved populations so that youth everywhere can have meaningful outdoor experiences that benefit them and help them understand how we depend on the natural world for our quality of life.

## EXPANDING OUR REACH

**ACROSS THE USA** — PLT delivers its curriculum and teacher training workshops across the U.S. through a large and diverse network of partners that includes state government agencies, forestry associations, nonprofits, colleges and universities.

PLT's network provides educators with customized professional development, state-specific supplements that address the local environment, and connections to mentor teachers, community members, and natural resource professionals. SFI Implementation Committees also collaborate with youth groups to teach kids about trees, forests, and the natural world using PLT's hands-on activities, which are STEM-focused and inquiry-based.

Constantly innovating, PLT's materials are regularly reviewed and updated to remain current with education trends and today's most pressing environmental issues. Based on educator needs, PLT now also offers online professional development.

Teachers value PLT due to the rigor with which it develops its training programs and multi-disciplinary lessons, which meet state and national academic standards. More than 20,000 educators attend PLT workshops every year and approximately 1 million children in the U.S. participate in PLT activities annually.

We are also expanding our outreach to teachers while they are still in training. PLT's materials give them a way to introduce environmental education into their lesson plans. These future teachers also get to try out PLT's teaching methods, which engage students through hands-on learning in the outdoors.

**INTO CANADA** — SFI formed PLT Canada as an independent non-profit organization in 2017 to engage Canadian youth in environmental education activities to learn about forests and other renewable natural resources. By building on current PLT programs in Canada, this newly formed organization is working across provinces and territories to help youth explore the diversity of careers in the forest, conservation, and sustainability sectors. These stronger connections to career pathways across PLT's curriculum will help develop Canada's next generation of forest and conservation leaders. As part of the Government of Canada's Green Jobs in Green Spaces Summer Work Experience Program, PLT Canada is also placing 1,600 youth in green summer jobs so they can explore careers in conservation and forest management.

**AND BEYOND** — PLT programs are formalized in Japan through an agreement with the International Education Resource & Innovation Center, and in Mexico through Protección de la Fauna Mexicana A.C. PLT was brought to Uruguay by Weyerhaeuser Foundation and is now coordinated by Lumin-Uruply S.A. SFI plans to use its considerable network to help broaden PLT's partnerships internationally.

## ABOUT THE SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INITIATIVE INC.

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Inc. is a sustainability leader that stands for future forests. We are an independent, nonprofit organization that provides supply chain assurances, delivers conservation leadership, and supports education and community engagement. Learn more: [sfiprogram.org](http://sfiprogram.org)

## ABOUT PROJECT LEARNING TREE

Project Learning Tree® uses trees and forests as windows on the world to increase students' understanding of the environment. PLT teaches students how to think, not what to think, about complex environmental issues, and helps them acquire the skills they need to make sound choices about the environment. Learn more: [plt.org](http://plt.org)



PLT is an initiative of SFI Inc.

