

Seedlings for Rwanda

Change begins with Knowledge



The word “broadcast” means “to scatter seeds.” With these programs, you can plant seedlings throughout your daily broadcast to become a Green Station. Seedlings are short pieces about climate change that can include facts, simple solutions, nature poems, songs, and listener ideas.

1. This is Seedlings.

French Singer/songwriter K-REEN was born in Ghana and sings a song called “Sauve Le Monde” about the importance of taking care of our environment.
[Play Song]

2. This is Seedlings.

Pregnant women and babies are more sensitive to pollutants in the environment than other members of our communities. Family members and friends can come together to make things safer for new mothers, which will also make the environment healthier for the whole community. Two of the biggest risk factors that a community has control over are drinking contaminated water and inhaling smoke from indoor cookstoves. If your community’s well and toilets are dug close together, it is likely that the well water is contaminated with harmful bacteria. Pregnant women may experience diarrhea and vomiting, and even miscarry their babies. Consider digging a well farther away and deeper – the deeper the well, the less the water quality will be affected by pollution at ground level. Spending a lot of time cooking over smoky stoves is bad for anyone’s health, making it more difficult for them to breathe and even leading to lung cancer, but smoke especially bad for pregnant women and their babies. When a mother breathes in too much smoke, her child may be born too early or at a low birthweight, both of which can cause major health problems. It may be a bit of an adjustment, but there are many kinds of stoves you can build or buy that use less wood or charcoal, create less smoke, and cook food more efficiently than traditional stoves. Consider building one of these stoves outside or building an indoor stove with a chimney so that women are not exposed to as much smoke.



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3. This is Seedlings.

Today we will learn how to make enriched compost, a high-quality, cheap, and environmentally-friendly fertilizer. Chemical fertilizers can pollute our drinking water, harm livestock and other agriculturally-important animals like bees, and even damage crops with overuse. You can make natural fertilizer at home out of animal manure, crop residues, weeds, and kitchen waste. Enriched compost increases crop yields, helps soil retain water, and is safe for animals and the environment. To begin, pick a place that is sheltered from the sun and rain, and is close to where you will want to spread the finished compost. When you have chosen a spot, loosen the top few centimeters of soil with a hoe. To make compost with the right blend of nutrients, use about 25 parts “brown” waste such as dried leaves, straw, and woodchips, to 1 part “green” waste like freshly pulled weeds and manure. Remember to wash your hands after handling manure to keep from spreading harmful bacteria. Keep an eye on your compost pile. Everything is going well if the middle of the pile is hot. If this is not the case, try adding more “green” waste or adding a little water to keep the decomposition going. Occasionally turn the compost with a shovel – the microbes breaking down the waste need air to survive. You can keep adding new waste to the top of the pile.

4. This is Seedlings.

Desertification, the process by which fertile land turns to desert, is a serious environmental problem sweeping the Bugesera region. Bugesera now gets as little as 10 millimeters of rain per year, though it was once considered the heart of Rwanda’s agricultural sector. Crop yields are low and cattle have nowhere to graze, so many people who used to make their living from farming have been forced to move to cities, especially Nyamata. Desertification is caused by a variety of factors: deforestation, soil erosion, climate change, overgrazing and over-cultivation, but most of these factors have their roots in overpopulation. Three million refugees returned to Rwanda after the 1994 genocide, and met their need for food and fuel through unsustainable land use practices. Rwanda needs better education about family planning and access to birth control to reduce the strain on the land. It is unfair for husbands to think of birth control as simply a women’s matter; though large families may be part of our culture, our country’s population affects us all.



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