



EVERY TREE

TOOLKIT: GUIDE

'Every Tree' supports postcard-centred storytelling in partnership with schools, communities, artists, activists, walkers, students and policy makers. Some stories are shared in words, some in drawings, and some in both forms. Storytelling like this can help foster emotional bonds with nature, promote sustainable behaviours, and enhancing environmental education, while also addressing cultural nuances and inclusivity.

This long form guide gives details, tips, ideas and practical examples of the Every Tree postcarding process.



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THE PROCESS OF POSTCARDING





2022-25

THREE YEARS OF GROWING



Over 3 years we have been gathering stories about trees from citizens and visitors to Glasgow. We have been meeting, talking, and asking those people to write (and draw) postcards about trees in their lives. Trees that they visit, trees from their childhood, or trees that they imagine. They have written stories and drawn pictures in a series of different events and occasions — from workshops and events in classrooms, to simple encounters on the street.

Each event varies from the places in which they happen (e.g. the street, a public space, a community centre), the level of planning needed to carry out the interaction (whether just an impromptu encounter on the street, or as an organised event), the types of people engaged with (e.g. the general public, university students, school children, adults).

A GUIDE

This guide describes how we go about undertaking the postcarding process, and will help anyone interested in carrying out it themselves. Teachers are likely to find this guide particularly helpful, and Every Tree has received its most engaging stories from school children. However, what we have found is that people of all ages are capable of telling amazing stories about trees. It seems the act of writing a postcard, using pens and pencils, on our colourfully design cards encourages participants to be 'childlike' in their imagination and expression. (After all were all children once, and the Every Tree postcarding project gives an opportunity for diverse groups, and in everyday settings, to explore deep seated memories and experiences that involve trees.) While this guide seeks to give a detailed description of how to undertake different events, it also recognises that almost every postcarding event 'tells its own story' and is affected by the context and situation in which it happens.

We have had a lot of help and assistance from people connected to each event — community leaders, teachers, student volunteers, events management staff — and who have used their contacts, knowledge and skills to contribute to the success of each event. While this guide provides our approach to Every Tree postcarding, individuals are encouraged to use their own creativity and knowledge to shape their approach — and, importantly, reflect and record that to share with each other (and us).

**EVERY TREE TELLS A STORY...
AND EVERY POSTCARDING EVENT TELLS ONE TOO!**

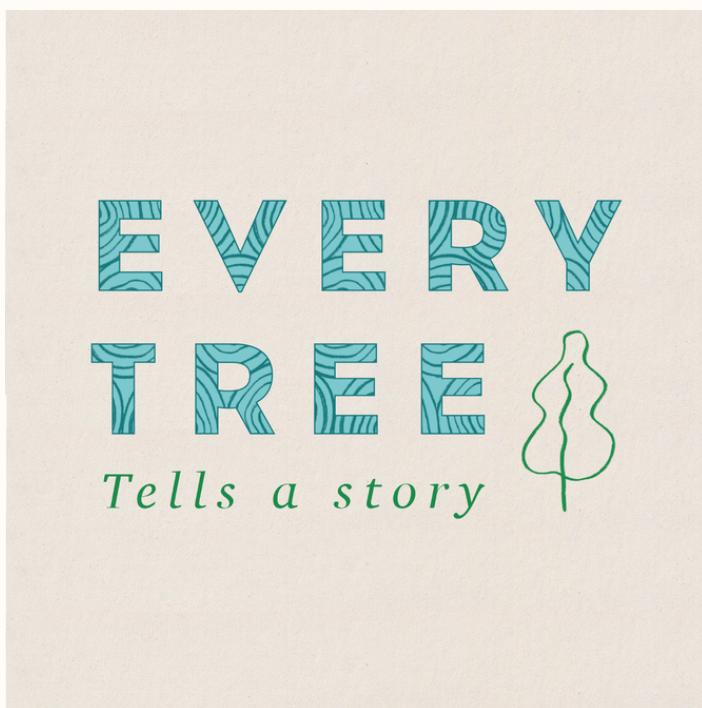


BLUE IS FOR WATER
AND WINTER

THE ROOTS

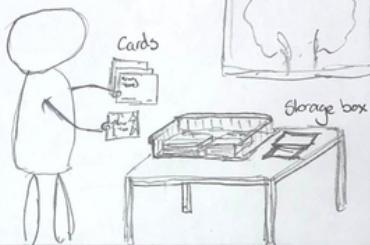
'The roots' are practices that underpin the project, and should be considered at all points of the process. They ultimately relate to *caring* for the cards — before, during and after collecting events.

CARING FOR THE CARDS



1: CARE

1: Care



The postcards that are used to collect the stories in the Every Tree project are the most important physical aspect of the process. They have been specially designed and printed, and caring for them before, and after, events is important — first the blank ones for completing, and then the ones that are filled out by participants. Furthermore, in events which include exhibiting previously completed cards (see later), you need to consider how to look after, and protect, those postcards.

Our advice is to keep your cards in a trusty plastic box to protect them from water damage or other elements. Keep the box in a secure location, ideally locked. Bulldog clips are very handy for clipping groups of cards together.

2: MATERIALS

A successful event requires that you have access to the necessary physical materials. It is important that that you have all of these with you, and that you keep track of them, during an event. The format and context of each event will dictate what materials you need/can bring. A general rule is to take a bit more than you think you will need — have spare cards, and plenty of pens/pencils — but don't carry too much if you are moving about.

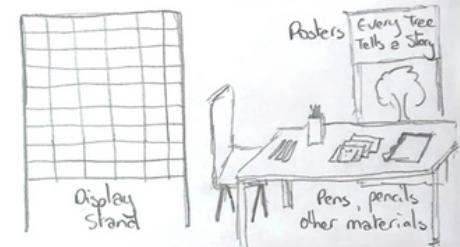
A list of materials and equipment includes the following:

- Postcards (and spares)
- Pens/pencils/crayons (lots of!)
- Other stationary such as scissors, tape/pins/bulldog clips for display (and for keeping cards together), string (for mobile displaying)
- Recording kit: Camera, phone, voice recorder, notepad
- Additional marketing: Banners, displayframe/stand for cards, sandwich board/A-frame (this is good for informing people during public events)
- Desk/stall: If you can bring/source a desk space and chairs for people to sit and write.

Other things to remember include:

- Personal identification (e.g. your organisational ID card)
- Supporting material (such as books you might have about trees)

2: Materials

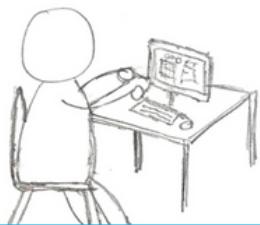


Depending on the type of content/situation you might consider having 'Participant Information sheets' which detail information about the project, what the postcards will be used for in research, contact details of the researcher team, and any other relevant information.



3: RECORD KEEPING

3: Record keeping



Develop a simple table (for example in Microsoft Word or Excel) that keeps track of the details of each event undertaken. Make note of dates, times, key contacts, audience and any other relevant notes about each event.

As part of a larger exercise, all of the cards are sequentially numbered as a means of indexing them by adding a small pencilled number to the top left of each card.

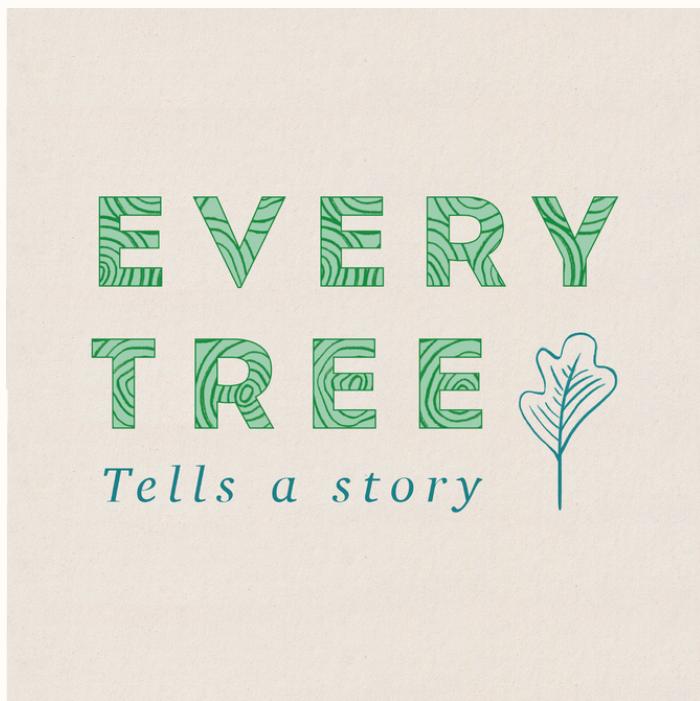
Record some simple measurements of each event, such as the number of cards completed, number of participants engaged with, or any other feedback. (The table you make will be helpful for recording reflective notes during and after events too, including on things to do differently in the future).

We have, in addition to storing each physical card, digitally photographed each card collected and manually typed them up. (See more about this in step 11: Store).





PLANNING AN EVENT



GREEN IS FOR
GROWTH AND
SPRING

BEFORE EVENTS

Planning and preparation is vital before an event. You will need to consider where an event will happen, with whom, and let people know about it.



4: PLAN

4: Plan



Decide whether you would like to keep the event: a) closed — usually managed by getting people to sign up or by delivering the event to a targeted group (such as a workshop), or b) open — allowing anyone to participate, meaning usually the event will be held in a space without restricting passer-bys to join. This can help you to decide on the space you will need for your event, manage expectations and the time-schedule for the event.

Consider how you will get to event, including transporting materials. It can be worthwhile, if possible, to visit an unfamiliar location beforehand to know travel routes, and to find out if there's materials or equipment available there that could be used (e.g. tables for a stand or audio-visual equipment). Ensure the venue is suitable, or consider how you might need to adapt your plans to fit. Consider any accessibility requirements, and the needs of those attending. This might involve booking ahead, or having specific adaptions put in place. When undertaking more impromptu events consider which groups you are likely to encounter depending on the place you have chosen to do the event, and how that might determine who is represented, and who isn't.

5: AUDIENCE

Each postcarding event should consider the group you will likely meet: their ages, time availability for participating in the postcarding. Is your event directed to people inside or outside your organisation? What are the age groups, are you inviting students or staff only (if in a university/college/school setting)? This will affect things like the clothes you wear, the language you adopt, and the prompts you will use to encourage people to participate. Participants should feel comfortable and encouraged to undertake the postcarding. You can feel you can gently prompt them to participate, but don't force people. Use your personal and professional skills as part of this!

Decide on an appropriate timing depending on the event type and the audience — e.g. during the day, weekdays, length of session, etc. Consider seasonality and weather, which is especially relevant if doing an outdoor event — wear appropriate clothing, and have kit to protect materials from the elements (see previously in 'The Roots').

5: Audience



6: PROMOTE

6: Promote

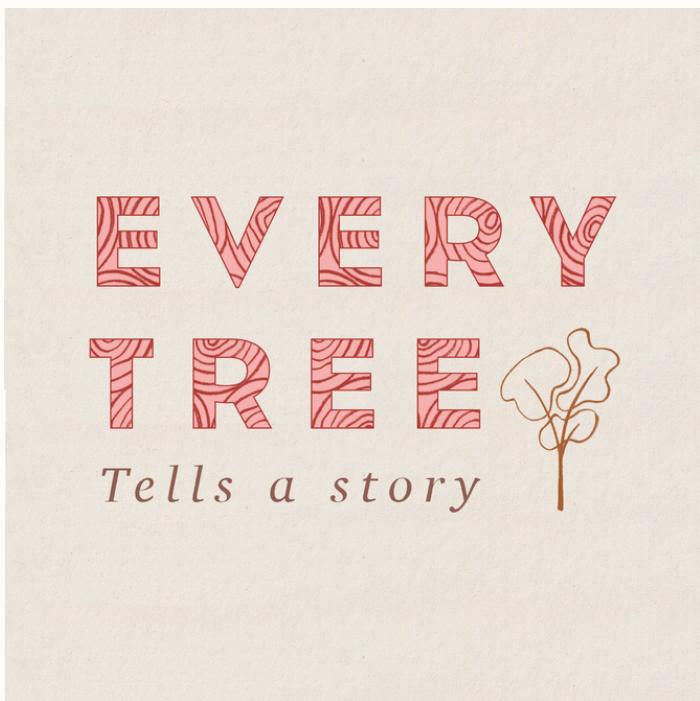


For more organised or formal events it is useful to communicate or promote the session beforehand. This may be through social media, or by other forms — such as printed posters, word of mouth, or announcements (for example at a school). If collaborating with others, including if doing postcarding as part of other events, you could prepare some short content for external organisers to share as part of their communications/promotions (e.g. an image for their social media, or words for a poster/email invitation). Ensure key information about the time and date of the postcarding event is communicated, and that anyone whose help/permission will be required is informed about the event. We encourage that you think ahead on ways you could record your event (see step 9: Record).





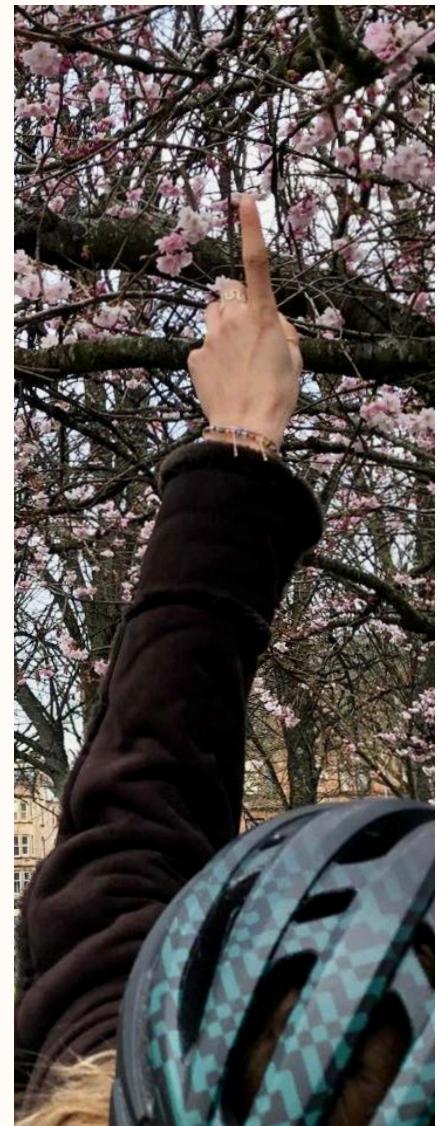
MAKING EVENTS HAPPEN



RED IS FOR
FLOWERING AND
SUMMER

DURING EVENTS

Stories get told and written during events. Setting up and recording what happens is vital as part of that.



7: SET UP

7: Set up



Depending on the location, organise the cards and materials so they are ready to be quickly accessed when you ask individuals to complete one. Familiarise attendees with the Every Tree project: this helps to explain the context behind your event. For example, when organising a formal event in the workshop format, give a brief introduction to the group, before getting people to engage with the 'filling out the postcard' exercise. If you are doing this in a one to one setting, do this directly to each person. If you are doing the postcarding as part of a team, allow all members to introduce themselves. You could include showing a video about Every Tree.

8: CARRY OUT

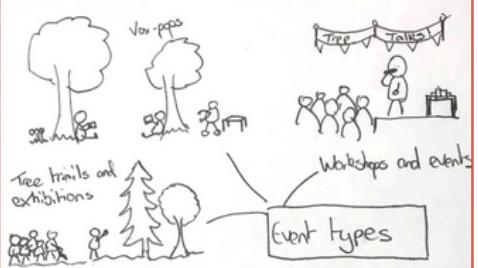
The following is a guide to carrying out events. We have split them up into various groups of event types- and provided some examples.

Impromptu events- vox-pops or 'situated' postcarding

These events involve approaching people in public space to fill out cards there. These events are very flexible, and can react to conditions such as weather or the number of people who are around. Given they involve approaching people without them knowing about the project, it is vital to be considerate and careful in how undertake this. Wearing something that identifies you is helpful — such as university identification — and in your introduction be clear about that. If someone does not want to participate, do not force them. Do not take 'rejections' personally, people can be busy or not comfortable being approached, and be attentive to body language and cues from people when you approach them!

Decide on a place which you think might be appropriate for engagement, and set up. It is useful to have something to make you noticeable, such as a sign — and consider you will need to have somewhere to keep materials and any other equipment/personal items together. Think about how the location can help prompt people's response, perhaps by situating yourself in a park or a street with trees nearby (or that are notable for their absence), or trees visible outside a window. Staging yourself under a tree offers additional practical benefits — such as shade in the sun, or protection from light rain — as well as useful for stimulating conversation.

8: Carry out



Key to the impromptu events, often done by a single researcher, is a need to be organised with materials, and to be mobile. Postcards, pens, and a couple of clipboards for participants is enough. If setting up a small stall, a place where people can take writing materials, or to leave their completed card. A poster to tell people about the event is helpful.



CASE STUDY 1: ON THE STREET

2022



Event style and preparations

Many of the initial Every Tree postcarding events we did at University of Strathclyde were of this style. Examples include one researcher spending time on sunny afternoons at the university campus central greenspace, where students and others would congregate. They'd set up in a central location, often beside a tree, and catch people as they walked by to ask them to fill out a card. Key preparation is to have enough cards and a few writing materials. But, probably more than any other event style, is to be prepared with the level of energy you need to repeatedly approach people. When you feel your energy dropping, take a break, move location, or decide to stop.

Being flexible and mobile

Key to this type of event is to be flexible, both in terms of how you engage with people and where you situate yourself. In addition to situating in one place, these interactions by researchers from Strathclyde undertook engagements by moving around a few pedestrianised tree lined streets and into parks in Glasgow's west end. On some occasions they would bring along some specially design 'post-boxes', which people would deposit their cards into once written. Initially most postcards were written with pencils that we provided, but over time we learned to carry different writing tools to meet different preferences and encourage writing, drawing, etc. Note, however, you can only carry so much material when mobile — and you need to be conscious of this.

Images: Card collecting at University of Strathclyde campus and 'The Hidden Gardens', Glasgow Summer, 2022

8: CARRY OUT (CONTINUED)

Organised events- workshops and invites to events

Organised events, that are either specific Every Tree workshops or lessons, or are included as an activity or talk as part of a larger event (such as a festival) offer different benefits and challenges. The benefit is that you can be more organised in your set up, and there is an opportunity to promote the event beforehand. However, these events can be less flexible, and might limit the audience compared to those who can be reached on more impromptu events. You might be more constrained by time or venue, and will need to rely on others for organising and the running of the event. Communication with partners is therefore key to workshop events.

The venue for organised events is less within your control. On the day of the event arrive early and set up event – materials, equipment, arrange a workstation with writing materials potentially in a quieter safe space. Meet and introduce yourself to anyone who will be around, or helping with the event, and explain what you would like from them (within what they are comfortable helping with).

If practical, hand each participant a card individually. Be conscious of the audience/participants you will be working with, and therefore the type of materials available, and the needs of any specific participants (such as a quieter/safe space for individuals who need such facilities). A more defined setting allows you to have more materials available for different participants compared to the impromptu events. Materials can be laid out in a common area for all to access, or distributed across desks or workstations. Try to ensure that everyone has access to multiple materials, and also encourage people, should they wish, to use their own writing materials. This has, in our experience, generated some fascinating outcomes!

Guide the postcarding activity, ensuring attention is given to anyone who needs prompt or help. Give some indication to the group the length of time they have to work on the card, but this does not need to be too constrained. Once everyone has had time to complete a card, you can facilitate a short sharing session, if participants are willing, where individuals can show their card and/or read it out — to the broader group, or with other individuals (see step 12: Share). Remember, as discussed, to take photos/ videos (if permitted) of the process.

Reflections on progressing from postcarding with individuals to groups:

As the postcarding process progressed we began to undertake a few different events in a group format. Specific workshops were carried out by an actor from the Every Tree collective in which they worked with children from a school on storytelling and visits to a city woodland, before they then undertook some postcard events in the classroom. These have generated some of the most engaging stories and cards we have collected — and is testament to the attention and skills of those involved. We have been invited to be part of events, including early on to a 'Garden Festival' with students at Glasgow University. Here the Every Tree representative arrived by bike with cards and materials, and with a space on the agenda, introduced the project to the audience and allowed time for postcarding.

CASE STUDY 2: WORKSHOPS

2023



Both Strathclyde, and Every Tree partner Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU), have undertaken events in the workshop format. Here GCU describe the process of organising a workshop, such as they have undertaken with their Estates department in an 'away day'.

Event preparations

Ensure you have booked a space for your even appropriate for the number of participants you have attending/signed up. Ensure that the space includes a computer and a screen for a presentation if you intend to do this, as well as tables/space for people to sit and fill out postcards.

Providing context

Prepare a brief presentation on the project and why you have chosen this as your workshop theme. You might like to use the workshop as a) team building exercise, b) community engagement activity, c) sustainability engagement activity etc.

How to engage?

- Guiding people to fill out the postcards: You can use specific examples of stories which would help people to think about their stories.
- Engaging with participants: If the workshop participants are separated into groups, you could visit different groups and see if they would need any further guidance.
- Sharing stories: You can encourage workshop participants to share their stories with each other. This would with team-building and ensure people are also engaging with each other.

Images: Estates team 'away day',
Glasgow Caledonian University.
March 2023

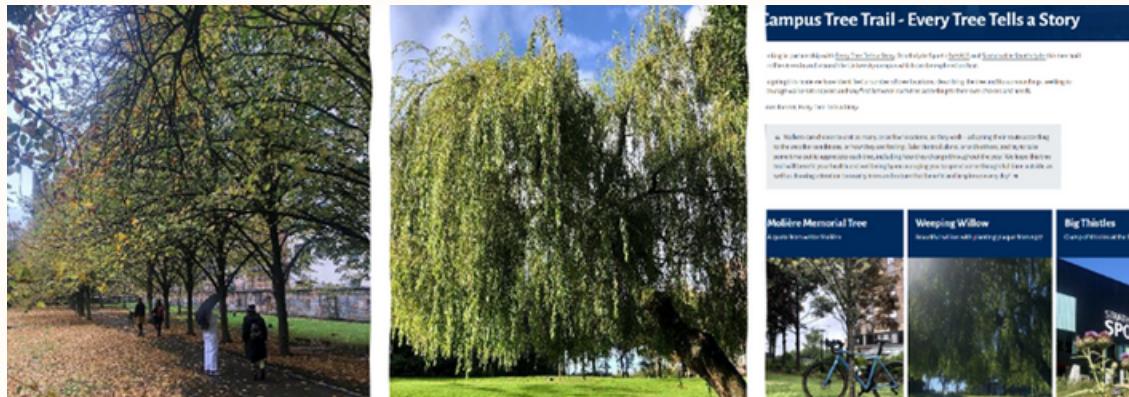
8: CARRY OUT (CONTINUED)

'Combined events' — event with a walk or an exhibition

Events with walks can be great to make the engagement longer and more fulfilling, and to allow people to be inspired by trees they come across as they move. If doing a walk then this requires broader planning. At the University of Strathclyde we have developed a specific campus tree trail which is ideal for this purpose (see case study below). If doing a walk it is helpful to pre plan this, and if possible visit the route beforehand. Think about broad issues around accessibility and inclusion, and the impact of seasonality and weather.

Furthermore, as Every Tree has grown, we have increasingly exhibited and displayed previously completed cards to accompany collecting events. By allowing participants to then add their cards to the exhibit adds greater value, and the formation of an interactive and evolving exhibition. These forms of the Every Tree process offer some extra dimensions, and appeal to broader outcomes and interests. The physical benefits of a walk, and the engagement interest of an exhibition.

There are several instances where we have incorporated the Strathclyde tree trail, while also tree trail events have been undertaken offsite at Kingussie in the Scottish Highlands. 2025 has involved a number of exhibition events, including Glasgow Goes Green Festival.



A CASE STUDY 3: WALK AND TALKS

2024

Plan out your route

University of Strathclyde, in partnership with Strathclyde Sport, have design a specific Campus Tree Trail for Every Tree Tells a Story (search online for: Campus Tree Trail - Every Tree Tells a Story), while Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) designed a walk & talk route to explore their campus's history and biodiversity. Strathclyde's route seeks to encourage engagement with trees on campus and the physical and mental health and wellbeing value of walking and being outdoors, while GCU's route seeks to showcase how it is possible to make connections with the campus' history through existing or non-existent trees, connect to campus green spaces, and learn about biodiversity.

Timings

Decide on when you would like your event participants to fill out Every Tree postcards: during or after the walk. If you decide to give the opportunity to fill out the postcards during the walk & talk, you need to ensure a suitable space (outdoor picnic tables etc.). It is also important to think about the best time for participants to join the event — you could time your event when most of the people in your organisation would be taking their lunch breaks.

Additional content or activities

The GCU walk & talk event is usually followed by a presentation on the Every Tree project as well as showcasing historic pictures visited during the event. A brief presentation may help provide context to event participants and/or deliver the event in a different format in case the walk & talk is cancelled due to weather. Having the presentation as part of the walk & talk, also gives the space for participants to have a moment to sit down and fill out their postcards. If within your budget for the event, refreshments could be offered to event participants.



Images: Information on walks and talks at GCU and Strathclyde, since 2022

CASE STUDY 4: DISPLAY & STALL

2025



Event preparations

Ensure you have booked a space for your event in case your organisation requires you to notify about occupying a specific area. Also, ensure that the space for your display & stall would be in an area to maximise capturing the audience/by-passers/engagement.

Notifying your organisation, as they will be able to let you know whether your planned event location/space is blocking any of the fire exits or whether your event would be overlapping with another event that will be held at the same location.

Ensure you have all necessary materials

Gather your materials for the stall and display: depending on the format of your display, you may need a standing board, string and small clips to hang the postcards etc. This is the time to be creative — you can think about the best approach for your organisation and available materials for displaying your postcards.

How to engage?

- Approaching people: some passer-bys will engage automatically by themselves, while others may need a bit of encouragement. Think about how you would approach people and ask them to engage with filling out the postcards. For an example you could say “Do you have a story about a tree or trees?” or “Would you like to read stories about trees and tell us your own?”
- Use your display to put up the written cards during the day. You can also use this to enhance engagement by inviting people to read what other participants have written.

Image: Collect, display and stall at Glasgow Caledonian University, March 2025

9: RECORD

9: Record



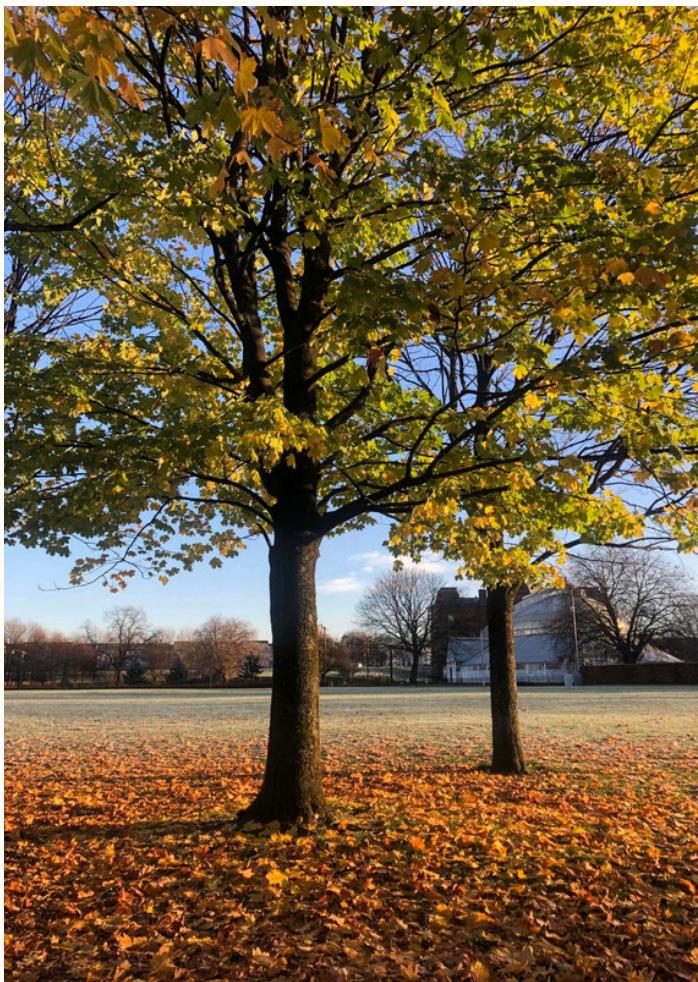
Try to record the event. There's often so much to do engaging with potential participants, keeping track of postcards, collecting cards that have been completed, protecting materials and any other items, making decisions on where to go next. However, it is really helpful to collect some images and notes about the event — write some words in a notebook, take photographs of the location and the set up, perhaps some videos of the surroundings. You can ask if participants would like to be involved in photographs.



The number of cards you collect is a good form of evidence of your events, but there are also many more engagements that happen beyond the writing of cards. It can be useful to try and keep track of total number of cards plus other engagements — the number of people who approach you, those that pass by and look, etc. Reflect on the fact that while people might not fill out a card, and might rather just watch on or stop to ask about the project. They might consider writing a card another time...

More organised sessions may also allow for an opportunity to collect feedback from participants about the process, and allow for reflection and adjustments to how you do things. Getting people to fill out a post-event survey, or by simply writing down any observations about a) how participants engaged, b) what did they seem to like about the event, c) did they need guidance on filling out the postcards.



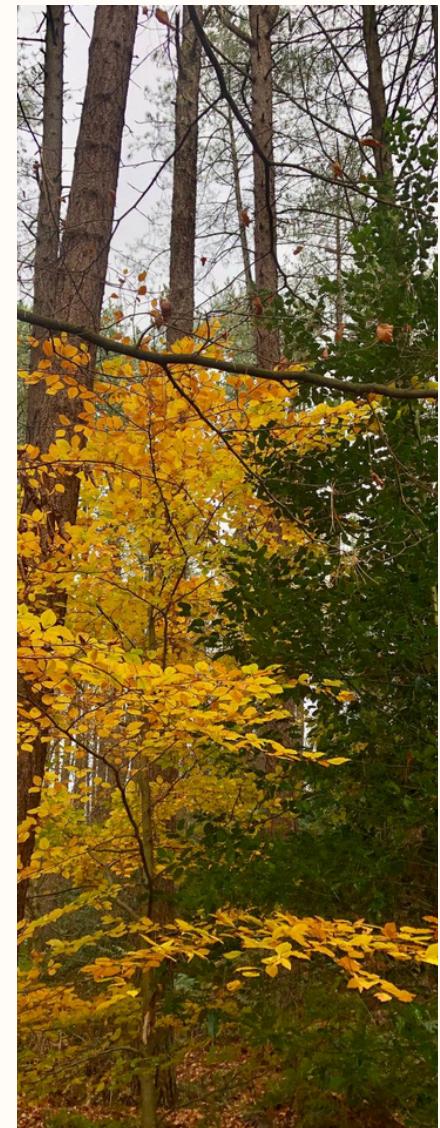
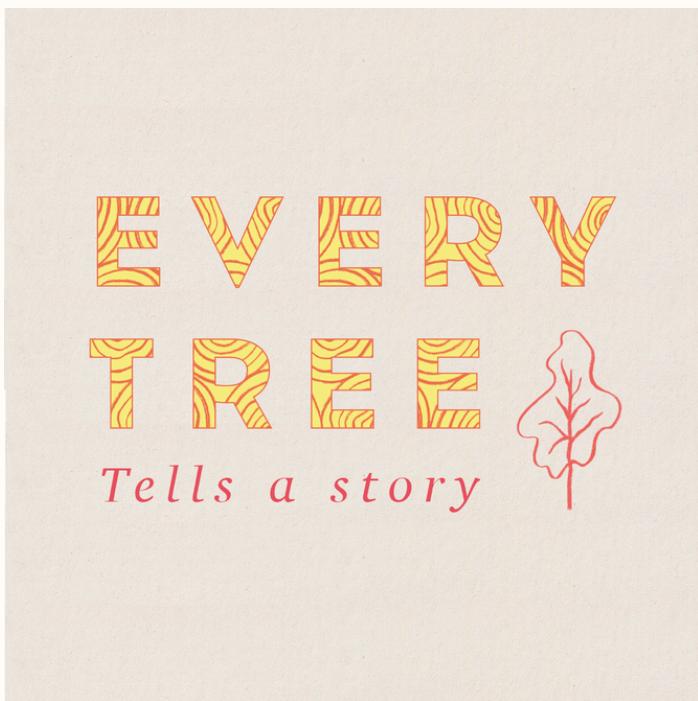


YELLOW IS FOR
HARVEST AND
AUTUMN

AFTER EVENTS

After an event the focus is on gathering and bringing stories together And the reflecting on them.

GATHERING AND SHARING STORIES



10: GATHER

10: Gather



Key action: Remember to restock your materials box if repeating the event! This takes you back to the key activities that are at the root of the postcarding process, caring for and storing the cards and related materials for the activity.

The process of keeping the cards organised and protected after an event is an important one. Gather all the cards completed during a particular event — it is useful to use bulldog clips to collect groups of cards together from each session. For each of these sessions keep a note with some context — date, time, location number of cards collected, general audience, other notes (this is data to correspond with your event table — see Step 3: Record keeping). A tip is to take one blank card and make these notes on it, and place it at the top of each grouped and clipped session of completed cards.

This organisation immediately after an event will really help with one of the key roots of the Every Tree process, indexing and recording the cards as part of a larger archive.

11: STORE

This stage aligns with one of 'The Roots' of the Every Tree process, and the need to store everything in a way that is organised and efficient.

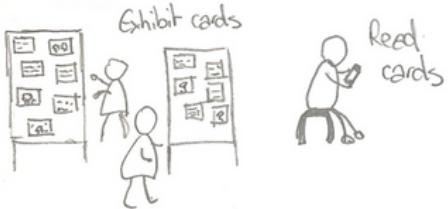
It is useful to, as soon as possible, photograph each individual card collected so there is a digital version of them in addition to the physical one. Also, each card can be transcribed and typed out, and stored in a document library. Doing this helps ensure the cards are protected if anything happens to the physical version, and allows for opportunities to share the stories more widely (such as on social media or in reports). We have various processes and tools we can use to undertake this archiving and digitising process.

11: Store



12: SHARE

12: Share



In step 8 we have made reference to undertaking exhibitions to show the cards as part of collecting events. This is a great way of allowing people to engage with the stories. You can also share stories and images from events on social media, newsletters, and blogs/articles for others to read about.

Importantly you should read, and re-read, the cards you collect! Both ones from events after you have done them, but also cards from different events as a collective. Do this as a solo activity or with others, and consider how the stories tell similar and different relationships to trees. An important aspect of this activity is to develop a process of 'coming to know the stories', and through re-reading them you will start to pick up on themes, or interesting connections or ideas.

Also use the opportunity to reflect on the process, and what things you might change for next time. Are there particular ways of approaching people that made them more ready to complete a card? What type of materials did people use? Are there other ways of doing things? What are other stories that could be told?





2026 ONWARDS

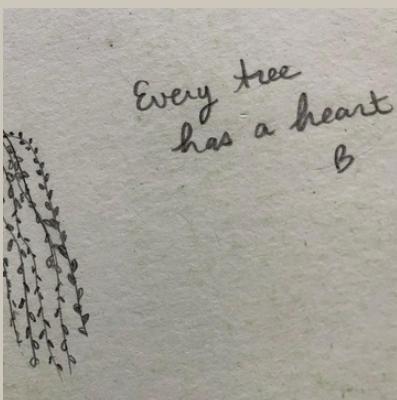
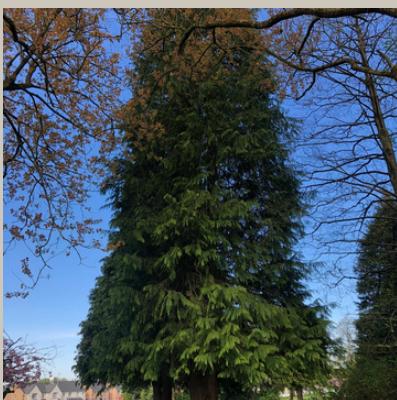
OVERALL REFLECTIONS

This guide is not meant to be a prescriptive document, but a framework in how to undertake the Every Tree postcarding process as we see it, and will assist anyone undertake an event. However, we recognise (and have often learned from others) that there are particular people and professions who are able to do this type of process using their own knowledge and skills — teachers, community workers, coaches all have inherent abilities to take this in ways that suit the groups of people whey work with. Use those skills, and adapt the approach to meet your situation!

There are ways in which we (as the Every Tree collective) can help facilitate and demonstrate ways of doing the postcarding, through from providing the original design of cards and materials, preparation for events, advising on ethics, carrying events out, and then organising and coming up with ways to share what the cards say.

Should you, or your organisation, wish to have us involved at any/all of these stages then this is something we would gladly talk about — so get in touch!

PLEASE REFERENCE EVERY TREE, SHARE OUR WORK, AND TELLS US ABOUT YOUR EVENTS. HEARING STORIES BACK IS FULFILLING!



Acknowledgments

This guide has been designed, collated and written by Dr James Bonner from the University of Strathclyde and with input from Shahrzad Zeinali. Kart Tori has contributed on perspectives from Glasgow Caledonian University'.

Every Tree Principal Investigators at University of Strathclyde Juliette Wilson and Sarah Dodd have shaped and directed the content and presentation.

Others from the wider Every Tree project have supported and given feedback.

Contact and more details

If you, or your organisation, would like to know about the Every Tree Tells a Story project, or other collaborations, please get in touch!

Every Tree:
<https://pureportal.strath.ac.uk/en/projects/every-tree-tells-a-story-2>
Instagram: @everytreetellsastory
Website: www.everytree.uk

Funding note

Funded in 2025 by ESRC IAA through Strathclyde Business School., University of Strathclyde