

Protecting Urban Trees

Trees are valuable assets to the urban environment. Once established they can provide beneficial effects for decades. Trees are, however, vulnerable to damage to their trunks, branches and roots that can shorten their lives considerably.

Wounding a tree's bark with a lawn mower or string trimmer can lead to invasion by insects or fungal pathogens that may cause a rapid decline. Winter sunscald to the unprotected trunk of a newly planted tree can have serious effects. Root and trunk damage during construction often causes premature death of trees. A few common sense practices can go a long way toward minimizing these kinds of damage. These might include:

- Avoid damage to trees from poor planting technique.
- Never wrap anything around a tree that may girdle it as the trunk expands.
- Use wide mulch rings.
- Wrap trunks of new trees with light colored materials to prevent winter trunk scald.
- During construction, fence off "critical zones" around established trees that will be protected from excavation, grade change and compaction from heavy equipment.
- Avoid trenching within the critical zone of any tree.

For more information about protecting urban trees see the following guides.

How to plant a tree - University of Missouri Extension

<https://extensiondata.missouri.edu/pub/pdf/agguides/hort/g06850.pdf>

Mulches – University of Missouri Extension

<https://extensiondata.missouri.edu/pub/pdf/agguides/hort/g06960.pdf>

Protecting Trees and Shrubs against Winter Damage. University of Minnesota Extension.

<https://extension.umn.edu/lawns-and-landscapes/protecting-trees-and-shrubs-against-damage-winter>

Preventing Construction Damage to Trees. University of Missouri, Extension

<https://extensiondata.missouri.edu/pub/pdf/agguides/hort/g06885.pdf>

Avoiding damage to trees during construction – International Society of Arboriculture

<https://www.treesaregood.org/portals/0/docs/treecare/AvoidingTreeDamage.pdf>