

Young Tree Maintenance



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Maintenance is vital to young trees during the first two or three years after planting. This will ensure that your tree establishes quickly in its new site and develops good root growth to maintain health and vigour.

Firming Up

Tread new trees in carefully and check them in the first few weeks after planting. If movement has occurred it is important to keep the soil around the roots firm and the stem and stake upright. Adjust ties as necessary at this stage.

Mulching

Newly planted trees should be mulched to a depth of 50mm in order to suppress weeds, maintain moisture and prevent the ground baking in the summer sun. It is important to ensure that the mulch material used is functioning effectively. Sheet materials should be firmly pegged or weighted down, organic mulches should be kept topped up where they have broken down into the soil, been blown or swept away.

Watering

Except in very dry summers most trees planted in the previous autumn should not need watering, particularly if they are effectively mulched. The exception may be large specimen trees or those planted late in the season. These may benefit from a thorough soaking of the ground, either through a proprietary watering system put in place at the time of planting or through some other means of trickle irrigation. The aim of the operation is to get moisture through the whole root zone to encourage deeper rooting. Short

heavy dousing or quick applications of lots of water will not achieve this and may encourage surface roots to develop that could be vulnerable to desiccation (drying out) later. Frequency of watering will depend on the weather conditions but may not need to last beyond the first growing season.

Pruning

Formative pruning, the removal of crossing, rubbing or dead branches, is beneficial for the tree when it is young as the wounds formed are very small and quickly callus over. Where a single main stem is desirable (most occasions, except for some ornamental plantings) multiple leaders should be pruned out to leave the strongest, straightest example. This operation will leave the tree well formed for its later, mature years and help prevent future failures.

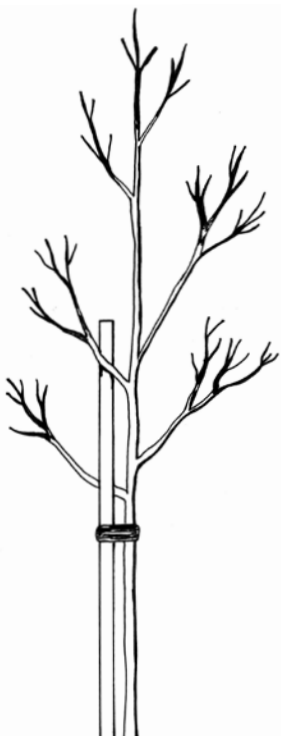
Weeding

Grass and other weeds compete with young trees for moisture, nutrients and, in the case of small planting stock, sunlight. Short mown grass can be particularly competitive for moisture. Maintenance of the mulch should reduce the need for weeding. If weeds do become a problem they must be removed by hand, careful shallow hoeing (taking care to avoid the tree roots) or herbicide applications. Suitable, approved herbicides should be used by carefully following the manufacturers' instructions. Strimmers and mowers should not be used anywhere near young trees to avoid damage to their stems.

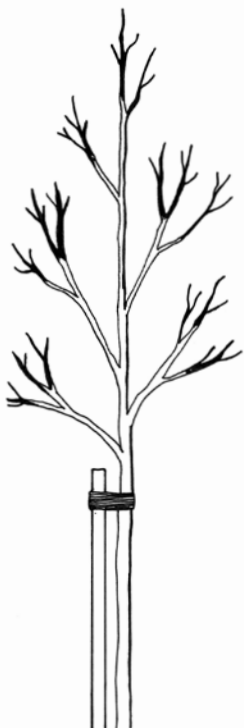
Stakes and Ties

Only proprietary tree ties should be used. These, and tree stakes, should be checked regularly to ensure that they are not damaging the tree stem through constriction or abrasion. Ties should be loosened as necessary to allow a small degree of movement. Tall stakes should be lowered in the spring after the first growing season to approximately one third the height of the clear stem, i.e. before the branches, and where other pressures, such as vandalism, wind tunnels etc. allow.

Stakes should be able to be removed 2-3 years after planting.



*Incorrect
method*

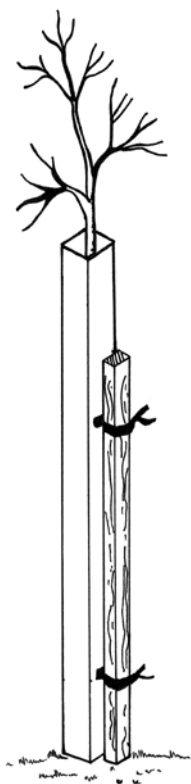


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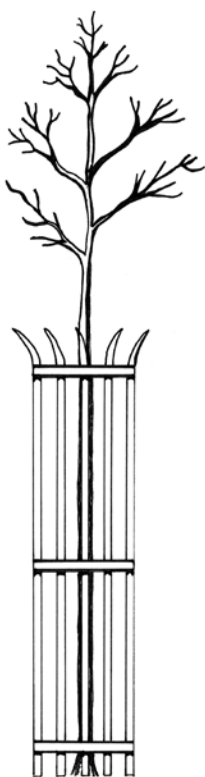
Protection

Ensure that young trees are adequately protected from pests such as vole, rabbit, hare or larger livestock such as horses, donkeys and deer. It is vital to regularly ensure that the protection is still functioning and not causing harm (tree ties too tight/rubbing).

Young trees in the urban environment may need bespoke formal guards to prevent damage from vandalism or vehicles. Do not forget to remove guards that are no longer required as the trees mature. Some trees may need some form of permanent protection.



Tree shelter



Iron tree guard



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www.trees.org.uk.*