



Tree Staking

 **Tree staking is one of the most misunderstood of garden tasks because it can do more harm than good.**

Compared to un-staked trees, staked trees have thinner trunks at the base, smaller root systems, and increased risk of damage from rubbing and wind damage. Studies have shown that trees establish more quickly and develop stronger trunk and root systems if they are not staked at the time of planting.

Use protective stakes only where lawn mower damage, vandalism or windy conditions are concerns.

Follow these tips to minimize damage to your tree.

- ❑ **Stake trees loosely.** In order for roots and stems to develop properly, the tree must be allowed to move. A tree should never be staked with a single stake closely tied to the stem at several points. This weakens the stem significantly.
- ❑ **Prevent stems from rubbing on the stakes.** Use two stakes on opposite sides of the tree perpendicular to the prevailing wind direction.
- ❑ **Minimize damage to tree bark during tying.** Use flexible material with a broad, smooth surface. Uncovered wire or rope quickly damages tree stems. Wire covered by sections of garden hose or specially made plant ties (available at your local nursery) work well. When tying, use a figure eight pattern so the tie material can cushion any contact with the stake.
- ❑ **The lower the stake is, the better.** When selecting the tie height, remember that the object is to support the tree so it doesn't fall over, not to prevent it from blowing in the wind. Tying it loosely lower on the stem allows the tree to sway, reducing the likelihood of the tree snapping in high winds.
- ❑ **Thin trees if necessary.** Some trees carry too much weight in the upper portion or are so thick as to risk damage from wind. These trees can be judiciously thinned to allow wind to pass through them. Call us for pruning estimates.
- ❑ **Remove stakes as soon as possible.** Most plants should stand without support after six to 18 months. Trees that require longer are experiencing other problems. 

References

- Arboriculture: The Management of Trees, Vines, and Shrubs. Harris, R.W. Prentice Hall, New Jersey. 1992.
- The Simple Act of Planting a Tree. Lipkis, A. Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., Los Angeles. 1990.
- "New Tree Planting," International Society of Arboriculture, http://www.treesaregood.com/treecare/tree_planting.aspx.

