

Beware of Tree Anchoring Devices That Choke Trees

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A variety of staking and bracing techniques are commonly used to anchor newly planted trees and palms. Materials used include black Wellington tape, wire and hose, sisal cord and steel bands each of which are wrapped around the trunk and tied to wooden stakes or metal rebar rods driven into the ground near the base of the tree. Such tree anchoring devices (also known as T.A.D.'s) are normally installed at planting to keep the trees standing straight and to prevent them from being blown over during high winds.

Under normal growing conditions, it should take only 6-9 months (slightly longer for trees with a caliper of 5 inches or more) for a healthy tree to become rooted in the ground. At that point in time, tree anchoring devices should be removed to allow the tree to stand on its own and develop trunk strength. Unfortunately, many homeowners and property managers do not realize this and allow the TAD's to remain on the tree far longer than necessary. In many cases, this results in strangulation as expanding trunk and branch tissues have nowhere to grow in the vicinity of the TAD's constriction.

This problem is particularly acute with Wellington tape (also known as black strap) because it does not expand and is not biodegradable. Unresolved, this condition may lead to severe girdling of the trunk to the point where the upper trunk and branches die or become hazardous and break off, necessitating costly removal and replacement.

(Please see photos at the bottom of this article.)

If your trees were installed over nine months ago and you still have tree anchoring devices attached to them, please contact your landscape maintenance company or who ever is responsible for maintaining your property, and have them removed. It is also fairly easy to remove the tree anchoring devices yourself. To remove Wellington tape and sisal cord you will need to use a utility knife. To remove wire/hose and steel bands a pair of wire cutters will be useful. Rebar imbedded in the trunk or roots are more difficult to remove. In this case a hacksaw or sawsall may be needed.

By paying attention to simple maintenance practices, such as timely removal of TADs, the aesthetics of your landscape will be improved and the trees you save will be your own!





