

## Protect Young Trees and Shrubs from Deer Damage

An overpopulation of deer in Chester County has led to an increasing damage from deer rub and deer browse, particularly for newly planted trees and many shrubs and perennials. The most serious form of deer damage is deer rub, which removes the outer layer of bark along with the cambium, which transmits the tree's nutrients, and if continued, can girdle and kill the tree within one year. Deer browsing of leaves on young trees and shrubs can also weaken the tree, and if unchecked over time, can also end up killing the plant.

Installation of some form of protection from deer damage is now required under Tredyffrin's Woodland Conservation Ordinance (adopted August 2023) when replanting of removed trees is required. It is also recommended for most new trees and shrubs, along with perennials which are not deer resistant.

To be effective, deer protection should be in the form of a cage or grid and should reach at least four feet high—the cage or grid will allow sunlight to reach the bark—and, ideally, should be at least six inches in diameter to allow for several years of tree growth. A metal or wooden post is recommended to secure whatever grid or cage is used to protect the tree. Solid black plastic piping is not recommended, because it does not allow the tree's trunk to photosynthesize and can also harbor wasps and voles. Deer have impressive leaping skills: if a whole section of yard is to be fenced, the recommended fence height is eight feet.

Below is an example of deer rub on a tree, plus several pictures of various protection measures recently installed at Wilson Farm Park and Valley Forge Middle School. Staking a tree can be helpful if a tree is young and it is part of a deer protection strategy, but staking should be removed after one year to avoid harming the tree and substituted with a pole to secure the grid or fencing itself.

Left to right:

- 1) Deer rub occurring on a new tree prior to installation of deer protection.
- 2) Trees cages installed with new trees at Wilson Farm Park by the Tredyffrin EAC.
- 3) Protective tree grids installed with staking on new trees at Wilson Farm Park.
- 4) Flexible plastic mesh installed with single post on new trees at Valley Forge Middle School.

