

NEWS RELEASE  
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### Young Tree Decline

Recently, I planted a young container grown tree. I followed the directions in the recent publication “How to Plant a Container-Grown Tree” by K-State Research and Extension. It is available at the office or on-line at [ksre.ksu.edu](http://ksre.ksu.edu). Spreading out the roots is one of the keys to a successful planting.

My tree is a typical tree available from the store. The lower branches had been removed for transportation. This leaves much of the lower trunk bare. A tree grown in its natural environment will have branches up and down the trunk. As the tree grows, those branches generally fade away. They are beneficial while the tree is young.

Many young and thin bark trees suffer from sunscald also called southwest injury. Symptoms are discolored bark, bark cracking, sunken areas from dead tissue, or sloughing of surface bark. These symptoms are found on the southwest side of the tree.

This damage often causes significant stress for the tree and even death. Trees likely grow slowly and continue to decline. The investment in money and time becomes wasted. There are methods to prevent the damage.

To protect my young tree, I placed a white vinyl tree guard around the thin barked trunk. Another option is to place a light-colored board or an opaque fence to the south and west of the tree to shade the trunk. The purpose is to prevent the trunk winter dormant cells from becoming active on warm days.

Any young tree could be damaged. The most common ornamental ones include ash, birch, crabapple, honeylocust, linden, maple, oak and tuliptree. Fruiting trees like

apple, cherries, peaches and plums may remain susceptible or even become more susceptible with age.

Protect the trunk for two to three winters after planting ornamental trees. Remove any protection during the growing season. Drought-stressed trees tend to be more susceptible. Trees should be fully hydrated in the fall before the ground freezes.

Trees improve air quality. They provide food and shelter for wildlife. Storm water is reduced by the tree canopy. The surrounding environment is cooled by trees. We need to protect our trees.

You can find out more information on this and other horticulture topics by going to the Riley County, K-State Research and Extension website at [www.riley.ksu.edu](http://www.riley.ksu.edu). Gregg may be contacted by calling 785-537-6350 or stopping by 110 Courthouse Plaza in Manhattan or e-mail: [geyeston@ksu.edu](mailto:geyeston@ksu.edu).