

Installing Tree Cages



Tree cages can be installed to help protect young trees and shrubs from deer browse and deer antler damage. These structures can widely vary in form and material. This slideshow will give you some ideas for how to install tree cages.

Tree cages are useful for more than planted trees. When a tree is cut, sprouts may emerge from the stump. Tree cages are ideal for protecting these sprouts from deer. The stump on the left was caged and has many young chestnut oak sprouts. The stump on the right was unprotected and has no living sprouts.



Cages are also great for small groups of plants, like this one protecting several sweet pepper bushes. Deer could easily jump over this 4 foot cage, but because the cage is only 8 feet in diameter, deer won't jump inside because they're afraid of getting stuck. If this cage were any larger, deer might be tempted to jump inside this cage.



Which Materials to Purchase?

The cage material can be metal or plastic. The posts that support the cage can be wood, metal or PVC. Stronger materials will cost more, but require less maintenance. If you cannot commit to checking the cage on a regular basis, then stronger materials are recommended.

These trees were protected by 4' tall plastic netting. This material is weak, but the cages are regularly checked; the stakes are tall and strong; and the cages are only 18 inches across. Had these cages been larger, this plastic netting may not have been strong enough to resist the deer pressure.



Cages need strong support to remain upright. The cage on the left is only supported by a single bamboo stake. This makes the cage vulnerable to damage from falling limbs and storms. In general, bamboo stakes are not recommended due to their lack of durability. By contrast, the cage on the right is well supported by metal and wood stakes.



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Tree cages can be many different shapes and sizes. They can protect individual plants or can encompass groups of plants.

Tools you might need to complete this activity include a mallet or hammer, zip ties, string, and wire cutters.

Tree cages only have to be 12" – 24" across. As the tree grows, you will need to prune the side-branches or increase the size of the cage. This tree was not pruned, and within 2 years it grew through the cage. Wire cutters will now be needed to remove the cage without damaging the tree. Had the tree been pruned, or the cage expanded, this would not have been necessary.

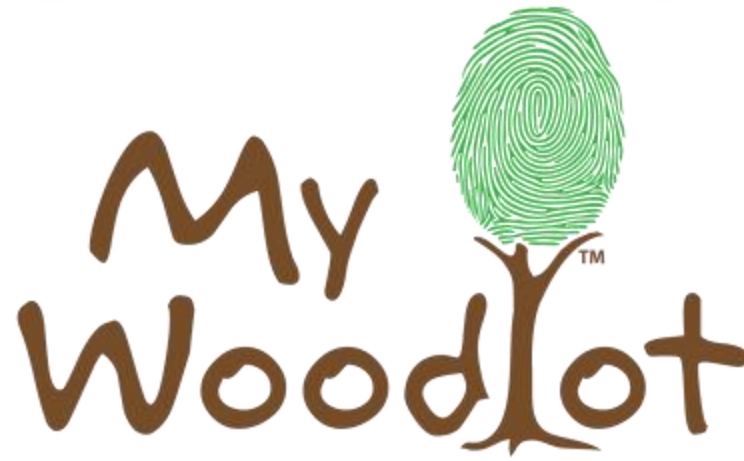


Some tree species have a wide branching pattern, like the eastern red bud. This tree cage was designed to allow the tree to reach its full aesthetic potential. The cage is 4-foot tall metal fencing held up by 3 oak stakes. The diameter of the cage is 3.5 feet, but the diameter could be increased to further prevent deer from reaching over the cage.



Maintenance: All tree cages need to be maintained. Pull or cut unwanted vegetation, check for breaches in the fencing material, and make sure that stakes are set straight and firm. Check your tree cages at least once annually, and more often if you're using weaker fencing material.





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