

Opening Fabricated Mulch Around Trees

To prevent girdling, it is recommended that slits be elongated in the **third year after the trees and mulch have been planted and installed.** For best results, make it a yearly habit to go out and review your trees, mulch and take note of the condition of the trees. Always be on the lookout for signs of insects or disease, in the form of holes in the trunk, large spherical growths along the branches, hollow spots on the main trunk, and open wounds from the bark splitting.

Instructions

These instructions are not only for the long rolls of fabric that are installed by the Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources District, but also for the 4' x 4' mats and any landscaping mulch that you may have in your yards or flower beds.

The first thing you should do is remove any debris such as corn residue, sod, or vegetated material from the fabric, even if the debris is not next the tree. The fabricated mulch will naturally breakdown over time by being exposed to the UVs from the sun. Removing the debris will also keep your knife from going dull quickly.

Take a sharp utility knife with hook blade or linoleum knife and elongate the slits as demonstrated in Diagram One 10" to 12" in the four directions. Be care not to hit the bark with the blade. You will need to check for the landscape staple that was put down next to the tree and it is best to remove that staple with a pry bar. You can reuse the staple on another portion of the fabric or simply take it in to be resold as scrap metal. Once you have finished with the mulch, inspect the tree for any signs of disease, insect holes, and remove debris that has lodged itself within the branches. For best results, do this procedure every year to make sure girdling does not occur and to check the health of your trees.



PHOTO ONE: THIS 15 YEAR OLD SILVER MAPLE SHOWS THE SYMPTOMS OF GIRDLING SUCH AS MULTI-STEMS AT THE BASE, SUCKERS COMING OUT FROM THE TRUNK, AND IS ACTUALLY STARTING TO GROW INTO THE MULCH. IF THIS TREE DOES NOT HAVE THE MULCH CUT BACK FROM THE BASE OF THE TREE SOON, THIS TREE COULD DIE. WITH PROPER PRUNING OVER THE COURSE OF 3 - 6 YEARS TO REMOVE THE MULTIPLE SETMS AND SUCKERS, THIS TREE HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BECOME A SINGLE STEMMED TREE.

The best time to open fabricated mulch is in early spring. After snow has melted and preferably after a rain to loosen debris from on top of fabricated mulch.

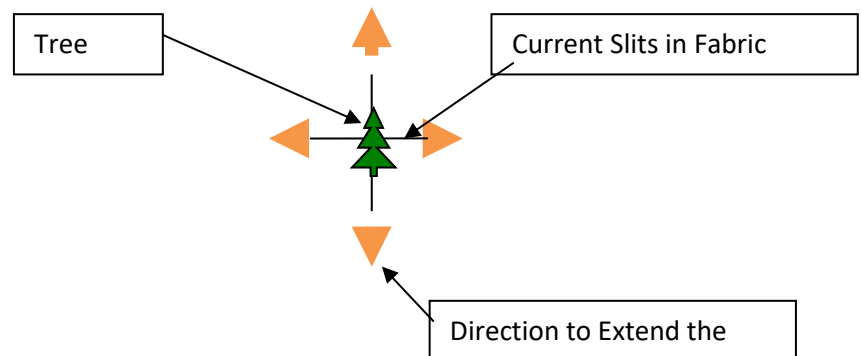


DIAGRAM 1: ILLUSTRATION OF A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF AN EVERGREEN TREE WITH FABRICATED MULCH INSTALLED. THE ORANGE ARROWS DEMONSTRATE WHAT DIRECTION TO ELONGATE THE SLITS THAT ARE ALREADY PRESENT IN THE FABRIC. THE FIRST ELONGATION WILL OCCUR 3 YEARS AFTER THE INITIAL PLANTING AND INSTALLATION OF THE FABRIC.