



Landscape Services

Safety Standard Operating Procedure

(Revised 7/2023)

Tree Wrap

This SSOP provides guidance on the safe practice of **Tree Wrapping**. Large and/or small equipment is not likely to be used in tree wrapping. However, with any equipment or tool the most basic premise for safe operation is reading and adhering to the manufacturer's instructions and warnings. This SSOP is not a substitute for the owner's manual(s) produced by the manufacturer.

Safety Requirements PPE Required: Dress appropriately for the weather and practice caution if using scissors or a pocketknife. Gloves and protective eyewear required.

Safety Hazards: Vehicle and pedestrian traffic, lifting, bending, overhead objects, dust, noise, sharp objects, blind spots, equipment malfunction, pinch points, hot or cold temperatures, and inclement weather.

Scheduled: Late fall through early spring.

Horticultural Elements: Prevent southwest injury aka sunscald.

IPM: It's imperative to remove the wrap completely in early spring to remove excess of potentially harmful insects that overwintered in the wrap. Note, not all insects are harmful. It's also important to remove completely as the wrap can hold detrimental abundance of moisture close to the tree, encouraging pathogens and decay.

Tree wrap is completed in the late fall to prevent thin-barked and newly planted trees from sustaining **Sunscald** aka **Southwest Injury**. Southwest Injury occurs when temperatures fluctuate drastically between day and night, which often happens in Oklahoma's cold season. The warm day temperatures signal to the tree to start transporting water through its tissues, then when temperatures drop below freezing at night the water in the tissues near the surface freeze. This can lead to long-term injury and affect the tree's overall health (see figure 1).

Tree wrapping comes in many forms, but we typically use crinkled paper and secure it with electrical tape. However, we are transitioning to using a reusable burlap method. Burlap is applied in the same method as crinkle paper.

Steps to Wrapping:

- 1) It doesn't matter if you start at the top or the bottom of the trunk. What *does* matter is how you unroll the paper. Imagine rolling holiday wrapping paper out on the ground, that's the direction you roll it on the tree (see Figure 2). Wrap the entire trunk from the lowest limbs to the ground. If using burlap sacks, wrap any printing on the bag to the inside so as not to cause an eyesore.

- 2) As you unroll the paper or wrap the burlap around the trunk, keep it tight. Loose material will catch in the wind or allow other elements to affect it and it will need to be repaired later. If using paper, as you travel around the trunk with overlap the previous pass by about one third to one quarter the width of the paper (see Figure 2). If using burlap, overlap layers by about 1 inch. Leaving even small gaps of exposed trunk can allow injury to occur.
- 3) If you approach some small branches, do not prune them off. They help the tree by bringing energy to the trunk. Instead, wrap the paper as close as you can to the small branch and patch any exposed area with a small piece of tree wrap paper (see Figure 3). Again, gaps in paper can allow injury to occur. If Branches are very small, they can be wrapped over.
- 4) Continue wrapping until the trunk is completely covered. Secure the top, middle, and bottom with two wraps of brown electrical tape (see Figure 3).
- 5) At the end of the season, crinkle paper and all tape may be discarded. Burlap should be saved for reuse next year.

Wrap trees that are staked first, as they are the newest planted trees. Wrap any think barked tree that has not reached maturity as they might be at risk of Southwest injury. Ex: Maple, Zelkova, Holly, even some Oaks and Elms can be at risk. Many young trees on campus will have squirrel protection wire, place paper tree wrap under the wire and burlap over the wire.

Contact the University Arborist for any questions or concerns.



Figure 2: Evidence of Southwest Injury.



Figure 1: Tree wrap paper unrolled against trunk. Overlapping quarter to third of paper above.



Figure 3: Patch paper around small branches. Secure with tape at top, middle, and bottom.



Figure 4: Tree wrapped with burlap.