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## Tree Guards for Tree and Shrub Protection

Surrounding the trunk or stem of a newly-planted tree with a protective barrier of hardware cloth can effectively reduce damage caused by meadow voles and rabbits gnawing the bark and living tissue. A tree guard should fit loosely, allowing for several years of expansion in the tree's diameter. Ideally, a guard should stand about two feet high with two inches set below the soil surface.

Tree guards are easy to make with a length of 1/4 to 1/2-inch metal hardware cloth, fine-gauge wire and a pair of wire cutters.

Cut the hardware cloth two feet high by whatever length is needed to encircle the tree trunk or shrub to be protected, with room for three or four years' growth. (Newly-planted fruit trees, for example, need a cylinder six inches in diameter.)

Bend the hardware cloth with your hands to form a cylinder. Place the guard around the tree or shrub, bury it in the ground two inches and then place a shovelful of gravel around the base of the guard. Use wire to close the cylinder securely.



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