



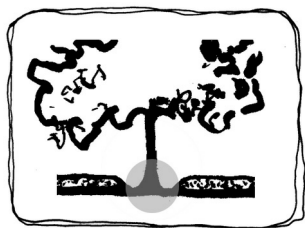
# Tree Specialists, Inc.

140 Washington Street | Holliston, Massachusetts 01746  
T 508.429.8733 F 508.429.7991 info@treespecialists.com

Committed to landscape conservation, preservation and restoration

## TRUNK FLARE DISORDERS A Preventable Situation

*Recent research by a national tree company has led to the discover that many tree and shrub ills are the result of damage to the trunk flare, which is the lowest few inches of the trunk just above its juncture with the roots. In most trees, the trunk flare is typified by a flaring out of the trunk just above ground level.*

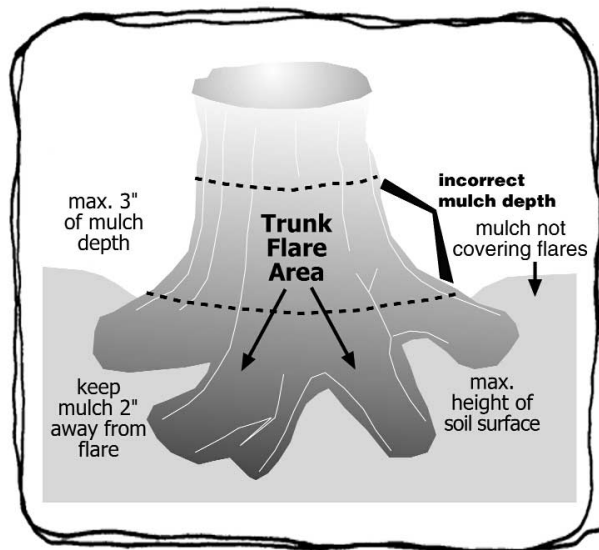


keep trunk flare exposed

The result of trunk flare disorders are all too familiar — foliar yellowing, early leaf discoloration and drop, dieback of twigs and branches of the upper crown and, eventually, tree mortality caused by secondary invaders (canker fungi such as Phytophthora and Armillaria, insect borers and others) that are attracted to stressed plants.

### Common Causes

The most common cause of trunk flare disorder is burial by soil or mulch. This occurs when trees and shrubs are planted too deeply or settle after transplanting, when soil is added around the plant base during landscaping or when mulch is piled against the trunk. Another common cause is physical damage from lawn mowers, string trimmers, vehicles or gnawing by small animals.



Most tree and shrub species are susceptible, with sugar maple, dogwood, white pine, hemlock and some of the oaks being particularly sensitive.

### Remedying the Situation

An amazing number of plants have improved rapidly in color and vigor within months of a trunk flare excavation. There is also far less winter injury in such



# Tree Specialists, Inc.

140 Washington Street | Holliston, Massachusetts 01746  
T 508.429.8733 F 508.429.7991 info@treespecialists.com

---

Committed to landscape conservation, preservation and restoration

plants because healthy roots produce the growth regulators responsible for winter hardiness. However, a large tree in severe decline from a trunk flare disorder should be removed before it becomes high risk.

If the plant is excavated, the resulting well must be left open to keep the flare exposed and continue the drying process. On young trees, new transplants and thin-barked species, sudden exposure to direct sunlight can cause "sun scald." This can be avoided by shading the area with landscape fabric or a plastic mesh product. If the plant was never before mulched, a layer no more than three inches deep above the roots can be very beneficial. However, the mulch should never come in contact with the trunk. In addition to the many benefits mulch provides, it also keeps lawn mowers and string trimmers away from the trunk. In addition, small rodents that like to burrow beneath the mulch while chewing on the tree bark will be encouraged to feed elsewhere.

## Follow-Up Care

Trees treated for a trunk flare disorder often require fertilization to renew vitality and health quickly. As always, dead and dying branches should be pruned out for safety reasons and to reduce the introduction and spread of disease into the tree.

We are just learning how important it is to protect this sensitive and vital part of woody plants. Inspect your plants from time to time to determine progress after treatment and to take further actions that may become necessary to preserve them.