

# VisPore® Tree Mats

West Polk SWCD offers tree mats to increase your bare root trees' chances of survival in their new home. When bare root trees are dug up and transported, they lose a significant portion of their root system. Transplanted trees will be at a big disadvantage if their limited root systems are forced to compete with weeds or established turf. While a layer of wood chip mulch is definitely the most effective way to keep weeds back and promote healthy roots, tree mats are a cheap, easy way to provide similar benefits.

## Tree Mat Benefits:

- Prevents weeds from competing with your trees for water, nutrients and sunlight.
- Conserves water by slowing evaporation while allowing water to infiltrate soil.
- Absorbs sunlight and warms soil for faster root growth.
- Makes mowing around small trees faster and easier.
- Easy to install over bare ground or matted/short-mowed grass.
- Discourages rodents from damaging trees.
- Cheaper than alternatives. For just \$2.50, a tree mat will provide 3-5 years of protection with very little maintenance, whereas herbicides and wood chips require regular reapplication.

## Installation Instructions:

- Plant trees. Do your best to smooth soil around tree so the tree mat can lie flat against soil.
- Trim surrounding grass as short as possible and clear away debris that might damage the mat.
- Lay mat over seedling by guiding the tree through the slit in the mat.

## **POSITION MAT SHINY SIDE UP!**

- Arrange mat so the tree is about an inch from one end of the slit.
- Use one staple to close off the rest of the slit.
- Spread the tree mat flat (not taut). Fold over each corner a few inches and staple mat down through doubled-up fabric.
- Check tree mats periodically. Reinsert staples and remove soil or plant material that accumulates on top.

West Polk SWCD sells 3' x 3' tree mats plus five staples for \$2.50 each (+ tax). That means it would only cost \$66.96 to provide up to 5 years of protection for 25 bare root trees. Those first few years after transplant are a crucial time when small transplants need to store energy and outgrow competition. A small investment early on will not only save you from wasting time and money on replacement trees, but will also pay off by allowing your surviving trees to grow to a useful size years earlier than unprotected trees could.