Plantra Grow Tube Guidelines: SunFlex Grow Tubes for Trees

Step 1 – Plant the seedling

Step 2 – Prepare the seedling for “tubing”
If your seedlings have side (lateral) branches please remove them carefully using sharp pruning shears before installing the grow tube (see figure 1).

NOTE: Do NOT bend side branches to squeeze or otherwise force them into the grow tube. Doing so will encourage weak branching and other problems as the tree matures.

Step 3 – Install Grow Tube and Support Stake

Preferred Method: “SunFlex System” Using SunFlex Stake

Your grow tube installation is only as good as the support stake you choose for the job. That’s why SunFlex Grow Tubes are designed to fully integrate the SunFlex Stake by “threading” the stake through large tie holes to achieve the strongest, long-lasting and secure stake/tube attachment available anywhere (see figure 2).

A. Position stake 1 – 1½ inches from the seedling with ground-line marker towards the ground. Use “pipe-style” stake driver only and drive stake until ground-line marker reaches the soil surface.
B. Position the grow tube above the installed stake, and insert top of stake into tube through the lowest tie hole.
C. Next, guide the tube down (being careful to gently guide the seedling into the tube) until the stake tip is just below the corresponding top tie hole.
D. Bend the top of the tube gently towards the stake tip to thread the stake back outside the tube.
E. Press tube base firmly into soil and when completed, the tip of the support stake should be 1-2 inches above the top tie hole.

NOTE: For 4ft, 5ft and 6ft grow tube heights only use the top and bottom tie holes to thread the stake as the middle tie holes are not needed for this method.

IMPORTANT: To complete the preferred method, firmly tap the top of the tube with the palm of your hand to seat the tube base into the soil. Mound additional soil as needed around the tube base to reduce entry by rodents. Attach Plantra Twist-Lock double wire twist tie securely on stake where it exits the top tie hole (see figure 4). The tie will grip the stake and act as a “stopper” to help prevent the grow tube from sliding upwards from influences by wind or animals.

www.PLANTRA.com
Secondary Method: Using “other” support stake on outside of grow tube

This method is not nearly as strong as threading SunFlex stakes through the tie holes but it does accommodate other stake materials. When choosing a stake, always avoid natural materials prone to rot such as bamboo and most wooden stakes which won’t last the estimated 5-7 (or more) years most grow tubes, tree tubes and tree shelters need to remain standing. Also, choose a stake that is one foot longer than the grow tube to achieve proper stake depth and alignment with SunFlex Grow Tube tie holes.

Drive stake as shown in figure 2. Next, position the grow tube over seedling, seat the tube bottom firmly into the soil and mound additional soil as needed around tube base to help prevent entry by rodents. Thread Plantra Twist-Lock double wire twist ties through paired tie holes, wrap the ends around the stake and twist to secure (see figure 3).

Step 4 – Install bird exclusion mesh top

All SunFlex Grow Tubes 4ft tall and taller come with exclusion mesh netting that is intended to discourage birds from entering the tubes.

Simply stretch the netting over the tube top like pulling on a sock. Pull the netting down to the top tie and gently insert one or both ends of the twist ties through the mesh to keep it from blowing off in the wind (see figure 4).

Additional Considerations

A Word About Weed Control

Weeds and grasses steal light, water, and nutrients from your seedlings and provide cover for stem-girdling rodents. Every square foot of soil is capable of producing a limited amount of biomass growth. By controlling weeds, growth potential is maximized. Using Plantra® SunFlex Grow Tubes will make your seedlings easier to find for weed control and provide protection against weed sprays. If herbicides are not intended for your planting, excellent weed control can be achieved with weed mat barrier.

Grow Tube After-Care

SunFlex Grow Tubes are designed to last for years – until your trees are big enough to make it on their own. In the first season or two, new leaves will form on the stem inside the tube as the seedling grows. Please do not remove these green leaves - they are important to fuel the tree’s early growth.

During the first season(s) please be sure that the bird exclusion mesh tops are still in place on all 4ft, 5ft, and 6ft tubes. If the mesh tops are missing, please contact Plantra and we’ll send you replacements free of charge. Once the seedling grows near or out the top of the tube mesh tops are no longer needed.

To keep your trees fully protected beyond the first growing seasons, do not remove SunFlex Grow Tubes until the tree trunk has grown to the size of the tube diameter. SunFlex Grow Tubes are perforated along two sides their entire length, allowing the tube to split open once the trunk diameter grows bigger than the diameter of the tube.

Waiting until the stem grows to the size of the tree tube diameter ensures that your tree is “wind-firm” and ready to support itself entirely. Doing so also allows the tube to help protect the main trunk against damage by antler rub, gnawing rodents or mechanical injury. Once your trees outgrow the tree tube diameter the tubes and support stakes should be collected and removed from the field. SunFlex grow tubes can be recycled and SunFlex stakes can be reused again.

www.PLANTRA.com

© Plantra, Inc. 2014