Tree Protection:
A beaver coexistence tool

Beavers provide many ecological benefits, but it can be frustrating when they cut trees that are special to us. Tree wrapping with wire mesh cages is an immediate and cost-effective solution that can protect mature trees along waterways while allowing beavers to remain in their habitat.

The specifications for wire mesh cages can vary, but all involve wrapping a heavy gauge wire around mature trees to prevent beavers from accessing the trunk. The goal of tree wrapping is to block access to certain trees and should not be used to stop beavers from taking any trees at all. Wrapping too many trees can deprive beavers of enough food to survive the winter, resulting in death, abandonment of the site, or more persistent attempts to get past the cages.
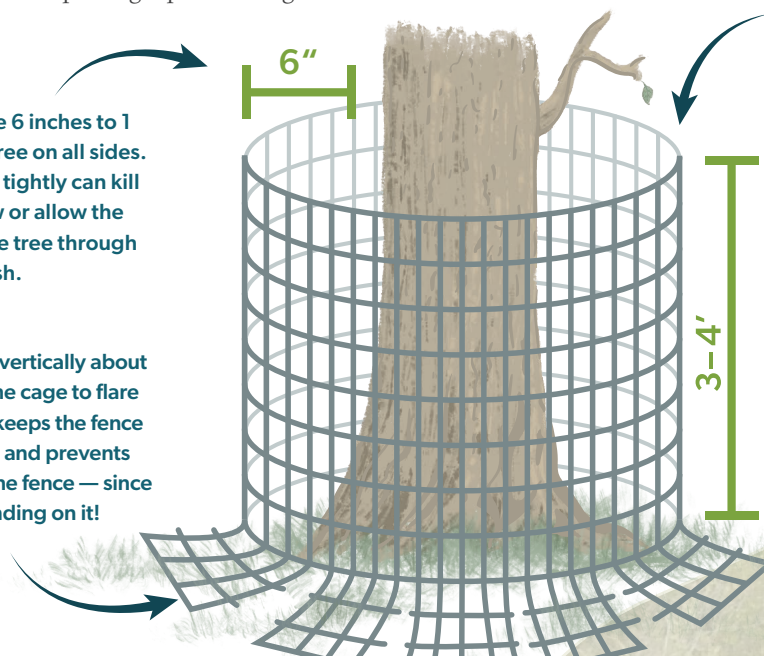
Innovative new approaches

Tree wrapping is not the only tree protection method available. Alternative approaches involve coating the lower portion of the tree trunk with either a sand paint or sand adhesive. Although these methods are generally less reliable, they can be more aesthetic. Use only paints or adhesives that aren't toxic to life.

The cage should be 6 inches to 1 foot away from the tree on all sides. Wrapping trees too tightly can kill them as they grow or allow the beaver access to the tree through the mesh.

Make 8–12 inch cuts vertically about every foot around the cage to flare out its bottom. This keeps the fence flush to the ground and prevents beavers from lifting the fence — since they will be standing on it!

6"

A 2 x 4 inch welded wire (10–14 gauge) is typically used. Choose a wire mesh small enough to keep beavers from poking their heads through but stiff enough to prevent them from chewing it. A beaver can chew through chicken wire!

The cage should be 3–4 feet tall. Anticipate that deep snowpacks or flood waters could allow beavers to access the tree above the mesh.

3–4'

Will tree wrapping work for you?

Tree wrapping works best in places near water sources where a few large, key trees are prioritized for protection. Certain tree species, like willows and aspen, have co-evolved with beavers. They are well-adapted to being cut and quickly regenerate, often sending up many new shoots in response. For the best chance at success, wrap only a selection of large trees with a focus on ornamentals or species that do not regenerate easily. For situations where every tree requires protection (like in orchards), refer to the crop protection infosheet.

For more information and references visit: projectbeaver.org

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