

# Have You Flossed Your Trees Lately?

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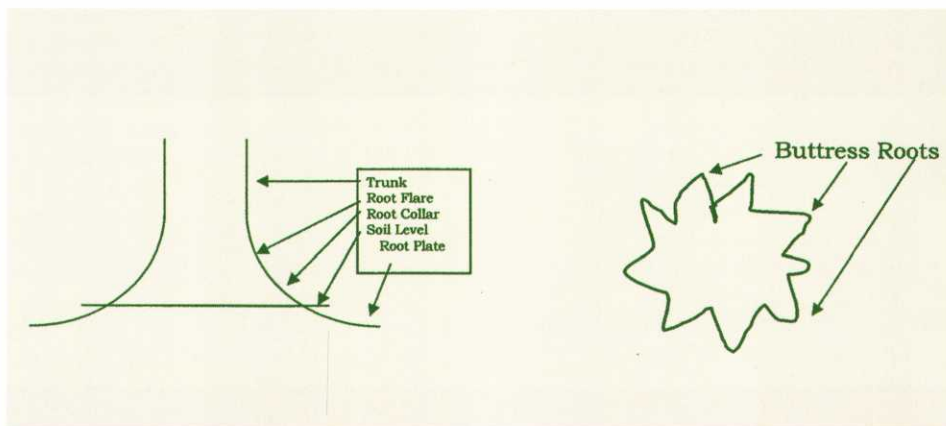
As a youth, my sweet tooth led me to many hours in the dentist chair. Dentist visits always started out well with the beautiful hygienist cleaning my teeth but invariably ended up poorly with drilling, filling and sanding cavities; these practices have the opposite of the desired effect on trees – they actually encourage decay.

Yet, we can still apply lessons learned from good dental hygiene to tree care. We floss our teeth to keep the spaces between them clean and keep the gums from advancing down the tooth creating places for decay to start. I propose flossing trees to establish and maintain a healthy relationship between the root flare and the soil level. Healthy, long living trees have many favorable attributes; chief among them is a pronounced root flare.

A flossed tree has an exposed root flare

which tells us much about a tree's potential. Each root buttress on the root flare is

large chunk of uprooted system is the root plate.



the beginning of a primary root. A greater number of primary roots equals a greater potential root system and tree. Decay at the root collar and potential tree failure is easily detected if the root flare is exposed.

Like teeth never brushed and covered with plaque, trees with no exposed root flare raise many questions. It's no secret tree trunks grow above ground, tree roots grow underground. The root collar is the dividing point. The root collar holds the root plate together. The root plate is the primary system anchoring the tree to the ground. Think of the last time you saw a tree and its root system completely uprooted by a storm. That

Stem girdling roots grow against soil covered tree trunks, compressing the vascular system, and ultimately reducing the tree's life span. (Ummm, I guess that would make them like braces left on too long?) As the trunk expands, the roots close in on the trunk, forming a tourniquet which slowly strangles the tree to death. When these trees fail, they break off at the base like a ball and socket joint, leaving the root collar in the ground. A root flare even with the soil level is less likely to develop this problem.

A few ways root collar problems get started are: Mulch and soil piled high on the root flare and trunk tissue; tree planted with soil on top of the root flare, and trees planted too deep, with the root collar below the soil surface level.

## How do we fix these problems?

+ **Plant properly**, with the root collar at or above the soil surface level.

+ **Mulch** with the intention of keeping the root collar exposed.

+ **Floss**: remove excess soil and mulch from the root collar. Keep flossing!


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The photos below illustrate the difference in particle size and uniformity between the Andersons small and mid-size fairway fertilizer and a competitor's product. Notice no nutrient segregation with Andersons mid-size due to uniform particle sizing versus significant nutrient segregation with competitor.

Andersons 25-3-9 + 2% Fe (150 SGN)



1 lb. of N per 1,000 = 175 lbs/acre = 3.7 particles per sq in.

Local Competitor 15-5-10 (215 SGN)



1 lb. of N per 1,000 = 290 lbs/acre = 2.0 particles per sq in.


The matrix shown below demonstrates a dramatic increase in particle coverage (PPSI) by using smaller particle products versus increasing the rate (lbs.) of a larger particle product.

POLYMER SIZE	Particles Per Square Inch Matrix 20-3-20 Fertilizer with 65% Nutratone					
	SGN 125	SGN 150	SGN 175	SGN 215	SGN 240	SGN 300
100	3.8	2.3	1.4	0.8	0.6	0.3
125	4.9	2.8	1.8	1.0	0.7	0.4
150	5.9	3.4	2.1	1.2	0.8	0.4
175	6.9	4.0	2.5	1.4	1.0	0.5
200	7.9	4.6	2.9	1.6	1.1	0.6
225	8.9	5.1	3.2	1.7	1.2	0.6
250	9.8	5.7	3.6	1.8	1.4	0.7
300	11.8	6.8	4.5	2.3	1.7	0.9

Avg. SG (g/ml) = 1.8

**“Get the Andersons small or midsize particle advantage”**

- Andersons small and mid-size fertilizer blends provide a uniform application of nutrients across the entire spreader swath.
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