

Grade Changes Affect Adjacent Tree Growth

Changing grade levels during construction can damage established trees. The injury causes short annual twig growth, smaller and fewer leaves, early leaf drop, leaf scorch and an unhealthy appearance. These characteristics appear gradually and are noticed two or three years after construction.

Gerald E. Draheim, Michigan State University extension horticultural agent, offers these tips on preparing your landscape plans to avoid possible damage to trees you wish to save:

Try to avoid any change in grade level around trees that are to remain. If a change is necessary and fill is needed, provided rock or tile drainage at the original ground level before fill is added.

If the fill needed should be more than one foot deep, build tree wells before excavation begins. Any excavations to lower the grade levels should be started as far from the tree as possible to avoid root damage. Maintain the original grade level near the trunk of the tree.



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