



Whatcom Conservation District

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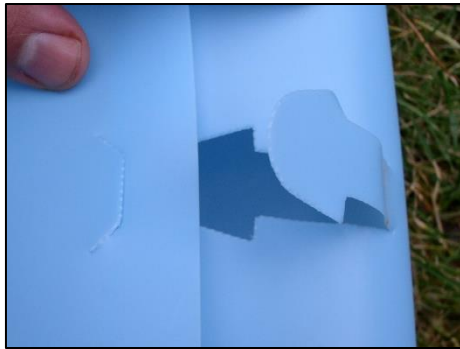
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How to use 18" Norplex Tree Protectors (Blue Tubes)

Use "blue tubes" to protect seedlings from rodents, mowers and herbicide drift. Keeps seedlings warmer in the sun (like a small greenhouse) and shields them from drying out in the wind. Also useful for protecting tomatoes and vegetable starts.



1. Punch out the 3 tabs and 3 tab holes.



2. Roll the tube lengthwise to bring the two long sides together with the shiny side facing in.
3. The tab hole side should fit on top of the tab side with the tab is on the outside.
4. Insert the tabs into the tab holes.
Make sure the tabs are secure.
5. Insert the bamboo stake into one end of the tube so it is lined up with the beginning of the first tab.



6. Push-in the beginning of the tab far enough to fit the bamboo stake between the beginning of the tab and the main body. Continue out the other side so the stake will come out inside the tube. Continue moving the

stake down the tube going over each tab, and back inside the main body, until you come to the end of the tube.



(Another way to secure the tube to the stake using a zip tie)



7. Center the tube around the seedling and press firmly into soil.
8. Pound the stake into the ground as far as possible leaving at least four inches of stake sticking out the top.
9. Pack soil at least 1-2 inches deep around the outside bottom of the tube. This will help keep out rodents and help secure the tube from moving.
10. You're done!



Why use Blue Tubes?

In nature, the struggle for survival always takes its heaviest toll on the young. Only a small fraction of the seeds produced by plants live long enough to grow into seedlings, let alone survive to maturity. Seedling plants must compete with other plants for food (i.e. light and water), and they are viewed as food by many predators (e.g. voles, beaver, deer).

Local groups and individuals who are dedicated to improving habitat conditions for fish and wildlife by planting trees along streams have tried a variety of techniques to increase the odds of seedling survival. No practice has worked better or been more widely adopted locally than the installation of tree protectors around seedlings when they are planted. The protector that is currently the most popular in our area is a light blue, semi-translucent plastic tube (18 inches high X 4 inches diameter) made by Norplex. The tube is usually anchored with a 36-inch bamboo stake. Though the tube may cost more than the seedling it is protecting, tree protection tubes are valuable for many reasons:

- Greenhouse effect: Tree growth is accelerated because tubes increase the temperature around seedlings and shield them from the drying effect of wind.
- Rodent protection: Tubes provide a barrier that stops voles and other rodents, which proliferate in grassy areas, from devouring seedlings.
- Reduced maintenance: Competing vegetation can quickly overtake seedlings in the spring and must be controlled. Tubes readily identify where seedlings are planted and protect them during mowing, tilling, pulling or spraying.
- Versatility: Tubes can be used in the home garden to shelter plants like tomatoes and peppers early in the growing season and to hasten germination in squash and other vegetables planted in hills.

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