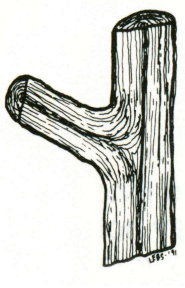
Cabling and Bracing

Why do we cable?

When trees are near people it is sometimes necessary to provide mechanical support to weakened branch unions. This procedure, called cabling or bracing, is done as a safety precaution to help prevent damage to the tree or to surrounding property.



Strong Branch Union

Notice two branches "knitting" together without conflict.

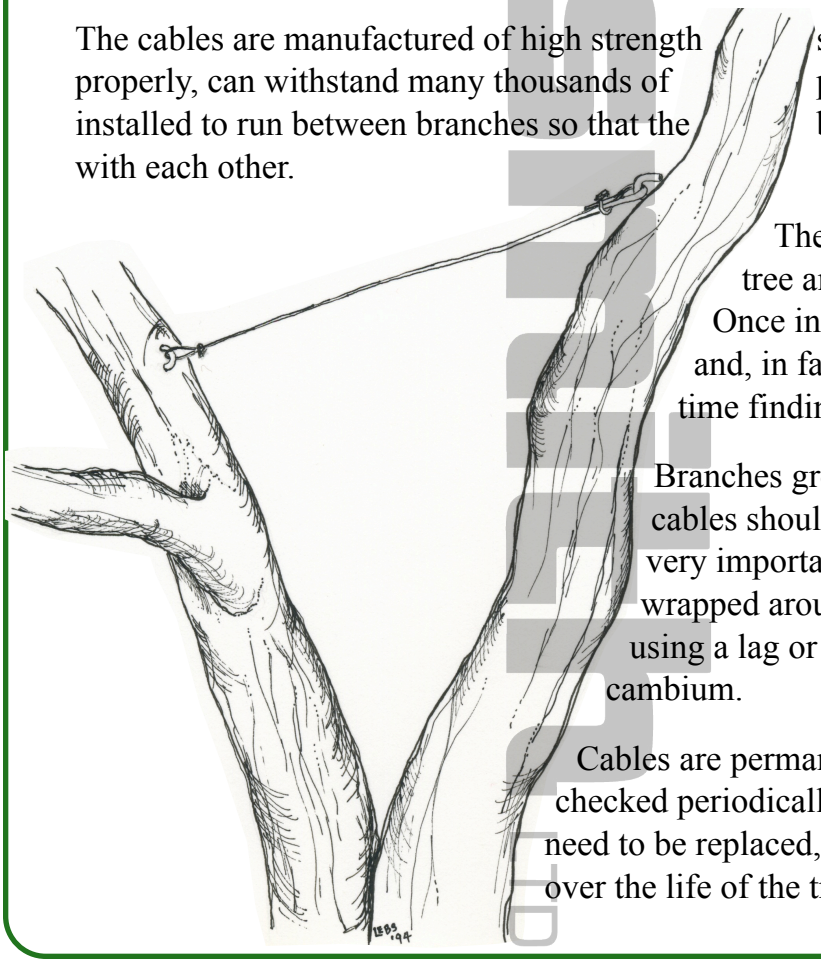
Weak Branch Union

Notice sharp angle of attachment where bark is actually caught or imbedded between two expanding branches. Weak branch unions should be trimmed out whenever possible; this is best done when trees are young.

The installation of cables in a tree can reduce the risk that in high winds or a storm weaker branch unions will tear or if they do they will be less likely to cause damage.

What does a cable look like?

The cables are manufactured of high strength steel, and when installed properly, can withstand many thousands of pounds of pressure. They are installed to run between branches so that the branches move more in unison with each other.



The cables are installed high in the tree and do not extend to the ground. Once in place, cables are not noticeable and, in fact, most of our clients have a hard time finding them once installed.

Branches grow stronger with movement so cables should not be installed too tightly. It is very important that any support cable NOT be wrapped around a branch but rather attached using a lag or screw eye to prevent damage to cambium.

Cables are permanent installations and should be checked periodically for soundness. They seldom need to be replaced, so their cost can be amortized over the life of the tree.

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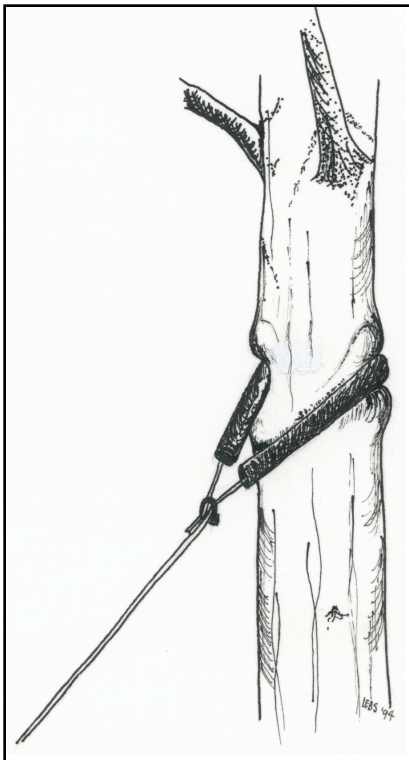
What about support for young trees?

Mechanical support for newly planted trees should ***only be used*** if the plant fails to hold itself up. This support should be loose to allow freedom of movement of the young tree. It should always be removed within one year to prevent permanent damage to the developing tree's vulnerable cambium layer. ***This is very important, or death can occur!*** (see Planting Abstract for more details on this)



This is what happens when a support is left on too long! This tree has been permanently damaged and may not survive. When wires, or strings are left in place too long they literally can choke a tree.

For this reason hammocks, swings, dog chains or clothes lines should NOT be attached to trees without the use of lags or screw eyes. You cannot imagine how many times we see this happen!

Storm Damage Repair

Sometimes bushes and trees are damaged from ice, snow or heavy winds and rain. This damage can often be repaired, or better, prevented using support cables. Arborvitae are the most common victim of this type of damage. The important rule of thumb in any damage repair is *never* wrap strings, wires, cables, chains or tape around trunks or branches. Wire or string should be connected with screw eyes.

PLEASE NOTE: No cable or support installation is a guarantee against branches breaking. Cables are a means to reduce risk but ***cannot*** eliminate risk altogether!