Some newly planted trees may need temporary staking

In my last column I talked about how the fall season is a good time to plant new trees. Just like toddlers learning to walk often need a helping hand for support, some new trees may need a little extra help, too.

Although typically unnecessary, some new trees may require staking if:

- The root system is unusually small and physically can’t support the larger, above-ground growth.
- The stem bends a lot when not supported.
- The site where the tree is planted is very windy.
- There is the possibility of animals uprooting or damaging unprotected trees.

Utilizing a tree stake will help those trees because it will help anchor the root ball reducing movement and giving the roots time to spread into the surrounding soil.

Gardeners who determine new trees on their property should be staked should install the staking or guyng attachments at the time of planting and leave them in place for only one to two growing seasons. When done properly, staking provides the stability needed until the tree can support itself.

It’s important to stake a tree properly. If not done properly, staking can cause further problems such as girdling the trunk and causing abrasion to the surface. Once you’ve determined the tree does need extra support, place the stakes as low as possible at the tree’s base – ideally no higher than two-thirds the height of the tree. Stakes should be inserted into solid ground outside the root ball. Small stakes (sometimes bamboo) that come with some trees should be removed at the time of planting; they provide no support to the tree.

Stakes themselves typically are wood, but metal stakes may be needed for larger trees or areas with severe wind. Materials used to tie the tree to the stake should be flexible and allow for movement all the way to the ground so that trunk taper develops correctly. If too tight, not allowing the trunk to sway, the trunk will be weak and thinner, which could lead to problems later on.

If you lost trees in last year’s ice storm and are looking to plant new trees this fall, following these guidelines will help ensure these new plantings get off to a good start.