



Picking your plant guard



TRIALS DECEMBER 2021
TO APRIL 2024



OTAGO SOUTH
RIVER CARE



For years, farmers, community groups and schools have been carrying out native planting in the Clutha District.

Plant guards have been widely debated and, Otago South River Care has tried several different types. We wanted to share our findings and insights with you!



How we tested different plant guards

Different plant guards were installed at a community planting day at the Lawrence Gymkhana Grounds on 22 December 2021. We revisited these plants one year later and again after two years in April 2024.

When we talk about plant guards, we also assessed weed and mulch mats and include some comments on those as well.

Benefits of plant guards and mulch mats:

- » Plant guards are designed to protect plants from wind, foraging pests and sprays.
- » Plant guards can also help create a micro-climate to help plants survive and enhance their growth.
- » Weed mats (mulch mats) will suppress weed growth and help to retain moisture.

When considering plant guards:

- » In riparian areas where flooding is a possibility, we recommend biodegradable guards in case they wash away.
- » Height of guards vary, with 300mm protecting against most pests, but if protecting against rabbits and hares, manufacturers recommend using 450mm guards.
- » A taller guard will help protect against spray drift.
- » Mulch mats come in different sizes. In areas of high growth, a larger mat might be desirable to suppress weed growth around the plant.
- » Woollen dags can be used instead of weed mats, with some success. Our advice is to be careful, as too much fertiliser can negatively affect plant growth in natives.

The trials

FibreGuard

FibreGuard is made from recycled natural pulp fibre with a moisture barrier coating, and the price includes stakes and woollen mat for 450mm, although shorter 300mm is also available.

We found that it was time consuming to construct and install. We had to align with consideration of prevailing wind direction. It was great for riparian areas that might flood, as they are biodegradable if washed away. They were still effective after one year but beginning to deteriorate after 2.5 years (getting saggy), which means they may need to be removed if your plants are still small and being squashed.



Combiguard

CombiGuard is made from plastic recyclable sleeve and bamboo stakes, and the price includes stakes and woollen mat. We found that they weren't as easy to install and felt flimsy, and at the shorter height at 300mm, were not suitable to protect against rabbits and hares. However, they were durable and still effective after 2.5 years and could be reused (although not biodegradable).



Eco Coir

Eco Coir is made from coconut husk, and are therefore natural and biodegradable, and the price includes coir weed mat and bamboo stakes. We found that they were fairly easy to install. At the shorter height at 300mm, they weren't suitable to protect against rabbits and hares. There was significant deterioration after one year and they stopped being effective. It was almost impossible to note where they were after 2.5 years.



TriGuard

Tri Guard is made from translucent twin walled polypropylene with a welded seam. The price includes woollen mat and wooden stake for 450mm, and it's available in other sizes. We found it was very easy to install and to angle into the prevailing wind direction. After one year they were still in good condition and effective and still going strong after 2.5 years. It proved good for harsh conditions such as high winds. It can be reused but is non biodegradable.



Tough Plastic Tree Guard Tubes

The tree guard tubes are made from a plastic sleeve and the price per unit included a bamboo stake but no mat. We found that it was helpful that there were two sizes to choose from. It was difficult to fit over some plant species and larger grade plants. It was still in good condition after 2.5 years but will need removing soon. May not need a weed mat due to small circumference.



New option – Garto Tree Protectors

Since we carried out the plant guard trials, a new product to protect native plantings has become available. These are called Garto Tree Protectors and are sourced from Southland. They are made of a durable plastic and have a larger circumference that will help decrease grass and weed growth around the plant which should reduce the need for maintenance. The shape helps to funnel water to the plant and so it could be good in drier areas. We have installed some of these and will keep you updated on how they go.

