Protecting fruit trees from weed wacker damage

Recognize the problem
Nylon string on trimmers or weed wackers causes serious wounds to the trunks of young trees. This damage increases the plant’s risk of disease entry and stunting, and may even kill the tree.

Background
The use of trimmers or weed wackers to control weeds among young fruit trees has become very popular in Barbados. The weeds compete with the young trees for nutrients and their control will enhance tree growth. However, incorrect use of this equipment damages the bark and the underlying cambium which divides to produce new wood. Girdling of the trunk sets in and the continuous wounding by the nylon string creates more problems than it solves in weed control.

Management
Erection of barriers or guards around the trunk in the early establishment of orchards is an effective and inexpensive method.

- Obtain a length of waste PVC plastic water pipe with a 4 inch diameter, which is about the correct diameter for saplings
- Cut into lengths of 8 inches with a hacksaw
- Use the hacksaw to cut through the length of the 8” piece of pipe
- Pull the cut ends wide apart and slip around the trunk (see photo)
- Ensure pipe is at least 2” deep into soil
- Change diameter of pipe as girth of tree increases

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Barbados

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