Monitoring the Root Collar

Trees should **never** be planted deeper than the root ball soil level – even a couple of cm above the root collar could cause collar rot and cause the tree to fail. (Note; the **tree's root collar** is the area where and immediately above where the **roots** join the main stem or trunk. Since roots and stems have quite different vascular anatomies, major vascular changes take place at this point making the trunk vulnerable to constant soil moisture).

If you or someone else planted your trees, it is always important to make sure that they were not planted too deep, as the tree above had been.

Regular inspections of the root collar to see if there is any excess soil on top of the original roots is necessary. This should be simple to check, as the roots are usually covered in a wire net, which may remain present for a number of years after planting, but will rot away in time.

If it is not caught, eventually it will lead to collar rot which will not be evident until the tree has started to fail.

If you find that some soil has moved over the top of the root ball, very carefully with a hand trowel, scrape the soil back to 10cm or more from the trunk. **Always wear thick, work gloves when working around the base of newly planted trees**, to prevent any root ball wires (which may have become sharp) causing cuts to your hands.

Should this inspection reveal that excess soil has accumulated, remove it from on top of the root ball **immediately**. Depending on the length of time it has been covered, examine the trunk to see if it has begun to rot. The trunk and basal flare (root collar) should always be exposed to the air. Timely removal of excess soil build-up may save your tree, but monitor it closely for signs of decay.