Guide to how to wrap a baobab tree in mesh to protect from elephant damage.
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Notes:

It is important that the mesh should be 1.8 meters high made with 2.0 mm thick wire (see specifications below). The tree should be covered from the soil up to 3 meters in height. Elephants can get their tusks under the mesh if it is not secured down to the very bottom of the tree. We also find that 3 meters is high enough that most elephants can't get their tusks in at the top. One length of 1.8 is placed at the bottom with another 1.8 meter length at the top with a 20-30 cm overlap at the middle does the job.

We use on average 1 roll of mesh per tree, with very large trees needing 2 rolls and small trees only needing ½ roll of mesh. Also make sure you get 1 packet (500g) of U-fencing staples (nails) per tree and a few more for good measure. We also use about 1 x 5kg wire per 10 large trees. **So for every 10 rolls of mesh get 10 – 12 packets of U-nails and 1 roll of wire.**

You will need the following per team:

- 4 - 5 people
- Gloves for each person (optional)
- 2 x Hammers
- 2 x Fencing Pliers
- 2 x Extendable ladders
- Diamond Mesh: 1.8 m (height) x 50 (size of hole) x 2.0 mm (thickness of wire) x 25 m (length) Galvanized Diamond Mesh.

- 25 mm or 32 mm U Nail Fencing Staple (50 pack (500g) per tree)
- 2.5 mm 5kg 25 m Galvanized Wire (5kg roll per 10 large trees)

Theft protection
If theft of the wire is a problem then additional equipment is required:

- Side cutter.
- Spray paint (olive-green or brown)

Step by Step

1. Stand the roll of mesh upright against the tree and unroll a bit of it. Make sure it covers the whole tree from the soil at the bottom of the tree and if needed even over some of the exposed roots. Elephants will hook the mesh off if they can get their tusks in at the bottom.
2. Hammer the staples into the vertical loose end of the mesh that is standing up against the tree. Putting staples in from the top to the bottom of the end piece to the bottom. About 5 staples should be enough.
3. Unroll the mesh, hugging the tree. Stable the end along the top of the mesh to the tree. As the mesh is unrolling, pull it tight against the tree. If there are hollows fold the mesh into the hollows of the tree and staple into the wood to hold the mesh in the folds. Hammer in stables at any point up and down the surface of the unrolling mesh to ensure it hugs the tree.
4. When the mesh gets right around the tree and meets the beginning part then overlap the mesh slightly and secure and cut.
5. Take a roll of wire and thread the wire along the bottom of the mesh and stable to hold in place.
6. Now using a ladder repeat the process with the rest of the mesh above the bottom section of mesh. You can also measure the girth of the tree and then cut the mesh to the correct length before securing it to the top half.

7. Make sure that there is a 20-30 cm overlap between the top mesh and the bottom mesh. The total meshed height should now be about 3 meters. This is the minimum height to protect against elephant damage.
8. Thread the wire along the overlap of the top and bottom mesh securing with stables.

Cavities for animals/birds

Look out for cavities close to the base of the tree and on the stem that may be used by small mammals or birds for nesting and roosting. These need to be cut open so that the animal/bird can still use it. This can be done by cutting the mesh after it is attached to the tree and nailing the sides of the mesh to the tree around the entrance of the cavity. See photo below.

Theft protection

If there is a problem with theft of wire mesh off the baobab trees, especially the big ones with complete rolls, it is advisable to try the following:
  o Cut the mesh into 1 - 1.5 meter strips and then attach to the trees
  o If using full lengths then after placing the mesh on the tree to cut the mesh with a wire cutter at random places in order to "destroy" the mesh and make it less desirable for the thieves.
  o Spray paint the mesh with olive green or brown paint so that it is easy to identify when someone is found carrying or using the stolen mesh.

See Time lapse video here: https://baobabfoundation.co.za/mesh-baobab-time-lapse-video/

Identify cavities for nesting animals and birds and cut the whole open and nail the wire to the outside of the hole.