



# ask

**Celebrating 20 Years!**  
**the landscape professional**

Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs

**Welcome to my weekly series!**

Email or mail your questions to: [info@sprigsandtwigs.net](mailto:info@sprigsandtwigs.net) or  
Linda Lillie, Sprigs & Twigs Inc, PO Box 245, Gales Ferry, CT 06335



Thank you Readers for Voting Sprigs & Twigs  
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**Question this Week:** *Hi Linda- I have a 9 year old Japanese maple. This year the bark of the trunk is starting to peel. I broke off a piece and saw beetle-like bugs. There weren't a ton of them, they may have been there just for shade? I love my maple. What should I do? ...Anna*

### Linda's Answer:

Hi Anna, the photos you sent show a tree that is planted too deeply into the soil. The trunk (stem) of the tree should flare out away from the base of the tree. What I see is a trunk that has no flare and has straight sides coming up out of the soil. The base of the tree has been smothering and rotting under the mulch that was piled up around the base of the tree and that has caused the protective bark to peel off. Unfortunately, this tree is not going to survive. You can buy some time by carefully digging around the base of the tree down to where you see the root flare. You may have to dig down a bit. If you come across any roots growing above the root flare, carefully cut them off back at the stem. Leave the stem and root flare exposed. This will help the stem to dry out. Remove any excess mulch you have around the tree and put down about 1" of new mulch around the base of the tree (2-3' wide) without touching the tree. This will help keep the roots cool and moist. Do not remove any loose bark. Let it fall off naturally. The tree will try to repair itself by covering the wound with new wood, but it will take a long time (years). Also, do not apply any type of tar or paint over the wound where the bark is missing. I would also suggest you check the mulch level on the other trees on your property and do the same thing. Good Luck.



*Linda K. Lillie has been President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc. for the last 20 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, an accredited NOFA Organic Land Care Professional, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation projects..*

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