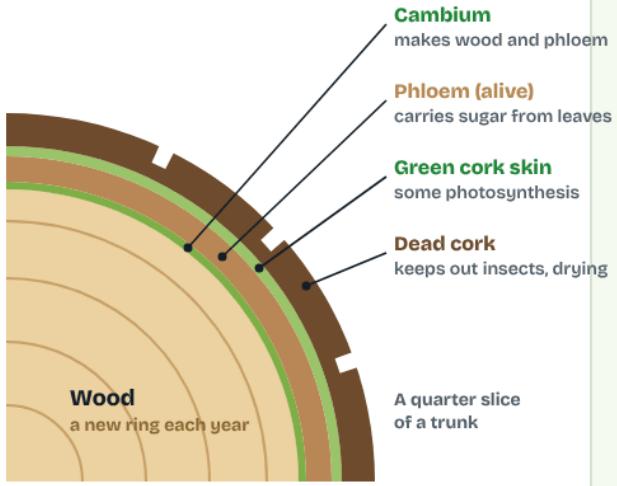
That is why

Why do some trees peel their bark?

Outer bark is dead cork that can't stretch, so as the trunk widens it splits, and trees like sycamores shed it.

A Inside the bark

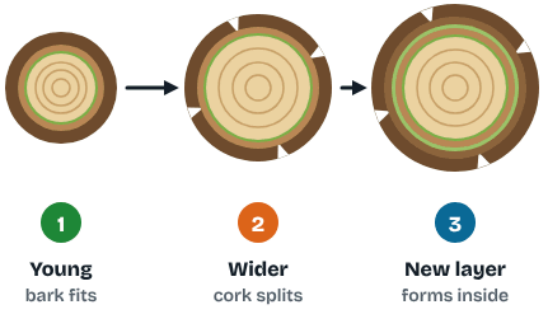


The problem: dead cork can't grow

Every year the cambium adds wood, and the trunk widens. The cork outside is dead, so it can't stretch to keep up. It splits, like a tight pair of jeans.

Oak keeps its old bark as ridges: the rhytidome.

B Growing out of its coat



A new periderm forms farther inside, in overlapping sections that differ by species. What happens to the old bark outside it?

Stretch, crack or shed



Beech
smooth, carvings last

Red oak
ridges stay

Sycamore
plates fall off

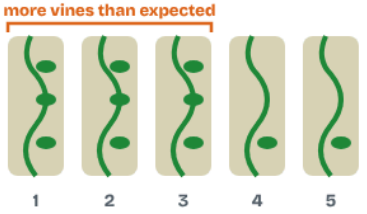
C Why shed? Tested

1 A clean window

Birch strips carry off moss and lichen. Up to half of sunlight can reach the green skin on new growth.

Does peeling keep vines off?

Sycamores at 5 Ohio sites



Sycamores had more vines than expected at 3 of 5 sites: no support for the idea.

New Zealand: flaky kauri held the most trunk epiphytes of 4 species surveyed.

Dead bark can't grow, so the tree outgrows it.

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