American Standard for Nursery Stock (ANSI Z60. 1-2014)

1.2 Methods of measurement

1.2.1 Measuring caliper

For fruit trees (Section 8), small fruits (Section 9), understock (Section 10), and seedling trees and shrubs (Section 11), caliper measurement shall be taken at the root collar or at other points expressly described in those sections.

For all other nursery stock, caliper measurement shall be taken six inches above the ground level for field grown stock and from the soil line for container grown stock, which should be at or near the top of the root flare, and six inches above the root flare for bare root plants, up to and including the four-inch caliper size interval (i.e., from four inches up to, but not including, 4½ inches). If the caliper measured at six inches is four and one-half inches or more, the caliper shall be measured at 12 inches above the ground level, soil line, or root flare, as appropriate.

Seldom are tree trunks perfectly round. The most accurate measurement will result from the use of a diameter tape. Caliper measurements taken with manual or electronic “slot” or “pincer” type caliper tools should be the average of the smallest and largest measurements.

Reference: