

Woody Plant Control in Landscapes

John Boyd
Professor -
Weed Scientist

Landscape professionals often cite woody sprouts as their most difficult weed problem in ornamental plantings. Oak, hickory, sweet gum, sugarberry and elm are just a few of the seedlings that pop up in flower and shrub beds. Seeds are moved on site in hardwood mulch or by animals, wind and water. Bamboo, English ivy, honeysuckle and privet may be planted intentionally but later become unwanted. Woody plants are difficult to eradicate by hand-pulling, hoeing or clipping because they have extensive root systems. In many instances, the careful use of selected herbicides will aid in controlling these invaders without damage to landscape plants. The herbicides recommended in this publication, glyphosate (Roundup Super Concentrate) and triclopyr (Ortho Brush-B-Gon, Fertilome Brush Killer), if applied to soil, are not taken up by plant roots. However, care must be taken to keep them off the leaves and stems of nontarget plants.

For big jobs, involving waxy leaf species, it is worthwhile to use Remedy, Remedy RTU or Garlon 4. These products contain a petroleum-based formulation of triclopyr which improves herbicide uptake. They are only available at farm supply or similar stores. The smallest package size for Garlon 4 is 2.5 gallons. Remedy may be available in 1-gallon containers. The price for triclopyr ester is \$80 to \$100 per gallon.

It is important to remember that patience and persistence are required when attempting to eradicate tough perennials. It may take several herbicide applications over two or three growing seasons to achieve acceptable control of some species. Always wait for regrowth before making a follow-up application.

Spraying dead, brown leaves with herbicide is of no benefit.

Methods of Herbicide Application

Foliar herbicide application – Foliar application refers to applying herbicide to the leaves of unwanted plants. Trees and shrubs can be controlled in this way with Ortho Brush-B-Gon, Fertilome Brush Killer or Roundup Super Concentrate. All are diluted in water before application. Spray to wet the leaves but not until runoff occurs. Coverage should be similar to that of a light rainfall. The herbicide solution should be applied so that **it contacts only the unwanted plants**. Foliar applications may also be made by wiping herbicide solution on the leaves. Sponges, paint brushes and commercially available wipers are just a few of the means for putting the herbicide solution on the leaves. Wear rubber gloves. Wipe-on treatments eliminate the possibility of spray drift but not drip.

Cut stump herbicide application – Stumps of woody plants will resprout after cutting if not treated with a herbicide. Resprouts can be continually cut off as they appear, but applying herbicide to the stump will **kill it** and prevent resprouting. Stumps should be cut as close to the ground and as level as possible so that applied herbicide does not run off. Sawdust and dirt, which can absorb herbicide and prevent it from moving into the stump, should be removed. Apply the herbicide to the stump as soon as possible after cutting (within 4 hours). On large stumps, the herbicide should be concentrated just inside the bark. This is where the living tissue that will carry herbicide

*Arkansas Is
Our Campus*

Visit our web site at:
<http://www.uaex.edu>

to the roots is located. Products that contain triclopyr amine, triclopyr ester or glyphosate are effective for controlling regrowth of stumps of many woody plants. Brush-B-Gon, Brush Killer or Roundup Super Concentrate are suitable if there are only a few stumps to treat. Apply the above-mentioned products undiluted for stump treatment. Use pruning shears to cut **seedling hardwood stems** near the soil surface. Treat the cut end with undiluted Roundup Super Concentrate or Brush-B-Gon. A cheap, 1-inch paint brush works well for this purpose.

Basal bark herbicide application – Woody plants can be killed without cutting the tree down by applying oil-soluble herbicides to the bark. This is only recommended for trees or shrubs with stem diameters of 6 inches or less. This method is faster than cutting vegetation down and treating the stumps. It is useful for those who can tolerate the appearance of standing dead brush. An oil-soluble herbicide must be used for basal bark applications to facilitate movement of the herbicide through waxy substances in the bark. Garlon 4 or Remedy must be diluted in penetrating oil. Pathfinder II or Remedy RTU is a premix of triclopyr plus an oil carrier. It is ready to use from the container. Vine-X can be used

for application to small stems (up to 3/4 inch in diameter). Vine-X is only available through internet sales.

Hack and squirt application – Use this method on trees larger than 6 inches in diameter. Use a hatchet to make one cut for every 2 inches of stem diameter. Use a squirt bottle adjusted to a solid stream to spray 1 to 2 milliliters of undiluted Roundup or Brush-B-Gon into each cut. Keep the cuts level so the herbicide will not run out the side. As in basal bark, this method has the shortcoming of leaving standing dead brush.

Danger!

Do not fall into the trap of using soil-active brush killers such as Velpar (hexazinone), Arsenal (imazapyr), Hyvar (bromacil), Tordon (picloram) or Spike (tebuthiuron) in home landscapes. It is too risky. If these products are applied over the roots of desirable plants, injury or death will result. The roots of large trees extend far beyond their crown width. Make a call to the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service before buying or using that cure-all herbicide you bought on the internet or got from a neighbor.

TABLE 1. Control of Specific Woody Plants

Species	Brush-B-Gon or Brush Killer Rate ¹	Roundup Super Concentrate Rate ²	Comments
Bamboo	NR	2.5 oz per gallon of water	Stimulating new, tender growth that will absorb the glyphosate is essential. Cut stems to the ground and spray new growth whenever it reaches 18 to 24 inches. Repeat each time new shoots appear.
Blackberry	4 fl oz per gal of water	2.5 oz per gallon of water	Treat in fall with Roundup and/or at bloom with Brush-B-Gon.
English ivy	4 fl oz per gal of water	2.5 oz per gallon of water	Roundup will not penetrate mature leaves. Apply the herbicide to newly emerged, pale green leaves. Treat in early spring as new leaves emerge or cut back and then treat the tender regrowth. The other option is to use triclopyr ester (Remedy, Garlon 4) which will be absorbed by mature foliage.
Greenbrier, Sawbrier	4 fl oz per gal of water	2.5 oz per gallon of water	Roundup will not penetrate mature leaves. Apply the herbicide to newly emerged, pale green leaves. Treat in early spring as new leaves emerge or cut back and then treat the tender regrowth. The other option is to use triclopyr ester (Remedy, Garlon 4) which will be absorbed by mature foliage.
Honeysuckle	4 fl oz per gal of water	2.5 oz per gallon of water	Apply at full bloom and up to a month after (early summer) with Brush-B-Gon or in September with Roundup.
Kudzu	4 fl oz per gal of water	2.5 oz per gallon of water	Apply at full bloom and up to a month after (early summer). Repeat applications will be needed.
Poison ivy	4 fl oz per gal of water	2.5 oz per gallon of water	Two weeks on either side of full bloom (early summer). Repeat applications will be needed.
Privet and Nandina	4 fl oz per gal of water	2.5 oz per gallon of water	Spray foliage after bloom up until frost. Brush-B-Gon is more effective than Roundup. Cutting near the soil surface and treating stems is a good option for privet. Some resprouting will occur. Using Remedy or Remedy RTU will improve results.
Trumpet creeper (cow-itch vine)	4 fl oz per gal of water	2.5 oz per gallon of water	Spray in late summer to mid-fall before frost. Repeat applications are necessary.
Virginia creeper	4 fl oz per gal of water	2.5 oz per gallon of water	Apply in late summer or at the first sign of fall color.

¹Based on a formulation containing 8% triclopyr or 0.6 lb per gallon.

²Based on formulation containing 50.2% glyphosate or 3.7 lbs per gallon of acid equivalent glyphosate.

Printed by University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service Printing Services.

DR. JOHN BOYD is professor - weed scientist, University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, Little Rock.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Arkansas. The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.