

Controlling Woody Weeds in the Landscape & Garden

Woody weeds are trees, shrubs, and woody vines that come up where you don't want them. Many including poison ivy, hackberries, and peppervine are "planted" when birds eat the berries and stop on your tree or fence and poop! Some such as yaupon, blackberry, or peppervine can invade via underground roots and rhizomes, or in the case of vines, simply sprawl into your property. Woody landscape plants like crape myrtles, ligustrum, and elm trees often cast their seeds around to sprout in places you may not want them.

Digging, pulling, and spraying are the most common options at our disposal. When digging out a plant, get as many roots as you can, since some species can easily resprout from roots left behind. Pulling very small plants is an option if the soil is wet, but you can easily injure your back this way! There are devices which grab a small tree seedling at the soil line and remove it as you remain standing and pull back on the handle.

Spraying the foliage is an option, but this can damage desirable plants growing near the woody weed plant. I find the cut stump treatment to be the best way to kill a woody weed without damaging desirable plants or causing damage to the environment.

The correct procedure for making a cut stump treatment is to cut off the woody plant a couple of inches above the ground.

Remove any dirt or sawdust left on the cut and immediately apply a product containing only triclopyr to the cut surface. Don't delay because the herbicide is best taken in on a freshly cut surface.



I prefer to use a sponge-on-a-stick found in most hardware stores for applying paint. Dip the sponge in the herbicide and dab it on the fresh cut surface. If the stump is more than about an inch in diameter, make sure to especially apply the herbicide onto the outer parts of the freshly cut surface. Most garden retail stores sell products with triclopyr in an 8.8% concentration. These may be used straight out of the container with no dilution for best results.

These treatments may be done anytime during the growing season but are especially effective in early fall. Here are some retail products containing only triclopyr.

| Product | % triclopyr | Only a few weeds | Many weeds |
|--|-------------|---|--|
| Hi-Yield Triclopyr Ester* | 61.6 % | 1 T in 1/3 cup of diesel or vegetable oil | 1 oz in 19 oz of diesel or vegetable oil |
| Bonide Stump Out Stump & Vine Killer Fertilome Brush Killer Stump Killer Monterey Brush & Vine Control | 8.8 % | Use straight from the container | Use straight from the container |

* This product mixed in diesel or vegetable oil can also be sprayed on the lower 12" of the trunk of young, thin-barked species, when individual cut stump treatments are not practical. Adding a blue dye such as Monterey Mark-It Blue or Hi-Yield Super Marking Dye makes it easy to see what has and has not been sprayed.