

PURPOSE: Chopping is pulling a rolling drum chopper over brush and small diameter trees, crushing woody vegetation. It minimizes soil loss and is acceptable on sites with moderate to severe erosion.

EQUIPMENT: For large vegetation, use a D-6 or larger crawler tractor equipped with a shear-type blade. A conventional straight blade is not acceptable because it will cause an excessive erosion hazard.



For smaller vegetation, a straight blade is satisfactory and a smaller tractor or rubber-tired skidder may be used. The crawler or skidder must be capable of pulling a conventional roller drum chopper filled with water. The drum should be 8 - 10 feet wide and equipped with sharp blades.

METHOD: Trees larger than 12 or 14 inches dbh are usually too large to shear and chop even with large equipment. Leave them standing and, if not suitable for wildlife, deaden them with herbicides or fell with a saw. Leave clumps of mast-producing and den trees, and underbrush in various practical locations (such as along gullies and in wet depressions), especially where clearings are large.

The objective is an area where debris is flattened and chopped to allow reasonable access for hand planting crews. A prescribed fire is typically used to clear the debris. On lower slopes, upper stream terraces, bottomland, and other places where moisture levels are high, hardwood competition will likely be severe as indicated by lush growth of the undesirable vegetation. Additional herbicide treatments will be needed and that extra cost should be anticipated.

On drier upland sites, re-chopping or other treatments will not be needed, because hardwood sprouts will not grow at a rate to threaten pine seedlings. On such sites, drum-chopping alone will be more economical than many alternative methods.

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