

HACK & SQUIRT

A Poor Man's Way to Improve His Forest



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When times are tough – and most people would agree they are tough right now – many non-essentials get put on the back burner. As a forester, I consider forest management as an important item to keep on the “To Do” list. However, I am wise enough to realize that most landowners do not consider forest stand improvement practices critically important, and quite often they get left by the wayside.

Allow me to share some information about a practice you might consider doing. Hopefully, you will agree that even a poor man can apply this technique in the toughest times. “Hack and Squirt” or frill treatment, as it is sometimes called, is a simple method of applying chemicals to kill unwanted or undesirable trees.

Most forest stands could be improved by removing or deadening non-commercial trees, or those that provide no benefit to the landowner’s management objectives. If no undesirable species come to mind, let me help: Chinese privet, Chinaberry, tallowtree, mimosa, and paulownia are just a few.

If left unchecked, many of these non-native invasive species can quickly take over your forest – regardless of the current economic times. However, with the cost of this practice being so affordable, there really is no excuse for putting it off.

What is involved? Well, all you need is a hatchet, some gloves, a spray bottle full of herbicide, and an eye for identifying unwanted or low-value trees. That’s it! A nice fall afternoon and your son, daughter, or spouse helping work the land is an added bonus. Passing along good stewardship values to your

Instructions for the Hack-and-Squirt Method



Make a series of downward cuts, leaving the chip. Immediately apply herbicide into cuts. Best control of the hatchet is at waist level.



Apply the herbicide into the cuts, avoiding excessive runoff.

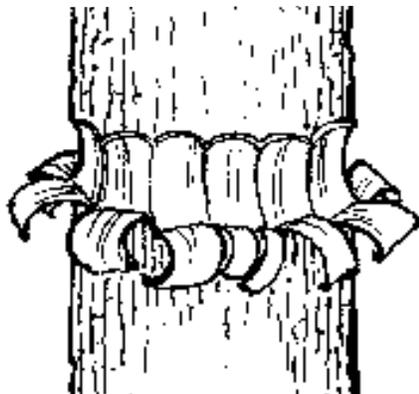
children/grandchildren is invaluable. It really is important to work the land, enjoy getting out, and practice good stewardship.

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) provides an extensive list of publications with detailed information about forestry herbicides and their proper uses. This information is found on the ACES website at <http://www.aces.edu/pubs/>

The description below was found in ACES publication ANR-1058:

It is best suited to trees at least 4 to 5 inches in diameter. Bark on larger trees is often too thick for most water soluble sprays to penetrate, so it is necessary to provide a direct pathway for herbicide entry into the plant's vascular system.

Use a hatchet to make a series of downward cuts in the bark around the entire circumference of the tree trunk. For most species, it takes about one cut for every 2 inches of trunk diameter. Frill cuts are overlapping cuts in the tree bark around the stem. Immediately apply the



selected herbicide into the cuts. Avoid application during heavy upward sap flow in the spring, when sap flowing out of the wound will prevent good absorption.

Apply herbicides registered for this purpose undiluted or in dilution ratios from one-half to one-quarter strength. Read the product label to determine the appropriate dilution. Amine formulations of Garlon, Grazon, and 2,4-D are generally more effective than esters. Roundup undiluted or half-strength is excellent for hack and squirt applications.

Product Availability and Cost

My web search found several products labeled for the hack-and-squirt method. The majority of the directions call for 1 milliliter of product per each 2 - 3 inches of trunk diameter at breast height (dbh). The price varies depending on the product you choose. A suitable glyphosate (a.i.) product can be found for as low as \$50-60 per 2½-gallon jug. The larger size is recommended because of economy of scale.

A 2½-gallon container can treat approximately 4,700 4-inch diameter trees. The cost for 2½ gallons at \$85 is less than 2¢ per tree.

Always read the label and the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) precautionary statement. Wear the recommended clothing and use the recommended equipment.

Landowner Assistance

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a USDA program that provides payments to participants to address significant natural resource concerns on agricultural and forest lands.

EQIP funds are awarded to landowners/users who agree to implement conservation/environmental practices through a contracting process. Practices and plans for EQIP are to treat the land to a sustainable level to address the primary national, state, and county resource concerns. One of these resource concerns, Forest Health and Wildlife, contains the forest stand improvement practice that includes the hack-and-squirt method.

You can apply for an EQIP contract at your local USDA Service Center. Applications are ranked and selected for funding in order to optimize environmental benefits. Batching dates will be announced as needed to rank and prioritize new or unfunded applications. Contact the local Service Center for further guidelines and details of the program.

Summary

The hack-and-squirt or frill treatment method is used to:

- Concentrate the growth on your land of the best possible trees,
- Reduce negative impact from invasive species,
- Improve wildlife habitat.

Financial assistance is a possibility under EQIP. With all the positives surrounding this practice, it makes sense to seriously consider using it on your land. So, enjoy the beautiful land you are blessed to own, and improve your forest stand by using the hack-and-squirt method. ♣