

Choosing the Right **CHEMICAL APPLICATOR** for Your Family Forest



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Many family forest owners depend on professional operators to help get things done on their property. This often includes the important task of weed control. Finding the right person for the job is important. Finding the right person starts with knowing what to look for when hiring.

Like most forestry practices, weed control is actually a mix of different activities. When hiring a chemical applicator, you are looking for someone with the right mix of knowledge, skill, equipment, and labor needed for the job.

It is important to get this right. Weed control is a very important step. Poor work can waste money or injure your trees. Even worse, it could mean damaging the environment or neighboring crops, creating liability issues for you.

So how do you choose the right chemical applicator? It boils down to communicating about needs and expectations. Here are some key questions and some specific things to talk about before hiring an applicator to work on your property.



Key questions to ask potential applicators

What are your qualifications?

Before you hire anyone to apply chemicals on your land, you need to know that they are qualified to do the job well and that they will do so legally, safely and without creating liability.

- Ask to see their commercial and/or consulting applicator's license and proof of business insurance. Are their license and insurance valid and current?
- Ask about the level of insurance they carry, if that is appropriate for your job. Some applicators may be willing to list you as "additionally insured" on their insurance policy.
- Ask about their forestry application experience. Who have they worked for? What types of chemical application have they done? Will they provide references?
- Ask about their familiarity with Oregon Department of Forestry forest practice rules for: spraying near buffer zones, weather restrictions, record keeping, and using restricted herbicides.
- Are they up to speed on training their workers about the new Environmental Protection Agency Worker Protection Standards?
- Does their licensing and experience qualify them to develop spray prescriptions?

What services do you provide?

It is important that you be clear about the services you are looking for, so you can determine whether the operator has the knowledge, equipment, and staff needed for the job.

Specific herbicides are used in many different situations, such as site preparation (before planting) or release (after planting) to control both leafy and woody plants. The application can be done in many different ways, including as a broadcast spray, spot or directed spray, "hack and squirt," or stump treatment. It can also be done using different tools, including backpack sprayers, vehicle-mounted sprayers, or squirt bottles. The right combination and approach (generally referred to as the "prescription") depends on the season, type of weed, and crop tree species.

- Clarify what parts of the job you are doing yourself and what you are hiring for—developing the prescription, doing the application, or maybe both. Do their qualifications match the job?
- What types of application can they do and what equipment do they use?

- Who will provide the chemicals for the job?
- Which of you will submit the “Notice of Operation” to the Oregon Department of Forestry for the application?

How will the work be done?

- Ask about their workforce (number and size of crews). What experience and certification does the foreman who would oversee your job have?
- Will they be able to finish your job within the desired time frame?
- Ask how to ensure their crew understands exactly what and where to spray. What photos, maps, or on-the-ground markings do they need from you?
- Will the operator provide you with official chemical application records in a timely manner? These include specifics on chemicals, location, and rates at which they were applied; information on weather conditions during application; etc.

How will I be charged for your services?

There are a variety of ways to work this out. **It is important that you communicate expectations and reach a clear agreement up front.** Shop around for bids and check references.

- Ask if you will be charged by the acre, by the job, or if costs will be itemized.
- Ask about billing and when payment is due.
- Do they guarantee their work? Will they come back and fix something if it isn’t done right? How will you determine satisfactory service?
- Get a written estimate for the job.

Where to look for a chemical applicator

The list of individuals and firms who can handle your chemical application needs is constantly changing. However, places where you can look to find a list of potential chemical applicators include:

- Ask other landowners who they work with and trust.
 - ❑ Oregon Small Woodlands Association: www.oswa.org/
 - ❑ Oregon Tree Farm System: www.otfs.org/

- Ask a forester.
 - ❑ Association of Consulting Foresters: www.acf-foresters.org/
 - ❑ Oregon State University Extension Service: extensionweb.forestry.oregonstate.edu/directory
 - ❑ Society of American Foresters: www.safnet.org
- Oregon Department of Forestry: www.oregon.gov/ODF/Working/Pages/FindAForester.aspx
- Ask a neighboring industrial forester if they could share contacts for applicators they use.
- Ask the state Department of Forestry or OSU Extension Service for a list of applicators in your area. They can provide names but cannot make specific recommendations.

Helpful resources

See these publications for more information about safe herbicide use and regulations:

- *Contracts for Woodland Owners* (EC 1192)
<https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/sites/catalog/files/project/pdf/ec1192.pdf>
- *PNW Weed Management Handbook*:
<https://pnwhandbooks.org/weed>
- *Oregon's Forest Protections Laws: An Illustrated Manual*, Oregon Forest Resources Institute:
<http://oregonforests.org/node/176>

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