

Wildlife Habitat Management using Herbicides

Joe Wiley, Wildlife Biologist



Herbicides are another tool in the habitat management toolbox. Herbicides in particular are useful in managing habitat for wildlife and for controlling invasive plant species.

When I need that extra tool to fully accomplish my habitat management goals, I have found that two herbicides best meet that need; Glyphosate and Trichlopyr. I use these because they pose a low risk to me, the applicator, and to the wildlife I am managing for and they break down relatively quickly. Below is a simple comparison of the two herbicides.

Herbicides

Glyphosate (various Roundup formulations)	Trichlopyr (Garlon 4A)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not bioaccumulate• Not persistent- fairly short half-life• Non-selective- Kills all plants that are treated• Not mobile in soils• Relatively inexpensive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not bioaccumulate• Not persistent• Does not kill true grasses• Somewhat mobile in soil• Moderately expensive

Maine law allows a landowner to apply general use pesticides (pesticides includes insecticides, herbicides and fungicides) to their own land without a pesticide applicators license. Having said that, I strongly recommend before using pesticides, you take the core exam administered by the Maine Board of Pesticide Control which covers the basics of pesticide use and safety. The BPC website www.state.me.us/agriculture/pesticides is a great resource for anyone considering pesticide use.

You should be sure that the herbicide that you decide to use is registered for use in Maine. Many chemicals for sale on the internet may not be legal to use in Maine.

Labels for all pesticides are available on line so check to be sure that your intended use is on the label. The label also lists personal protective equipment that you'll need and recommended rates of application. All of these label requirements are the law.

You should develop a vegetation/habitat management plan for all areas that you manage that incorporates the principles of integrated vegetation management. This is a blueprint for what to treat, when to treat it and should include non-chemical practices for vegetation management.

If you have a forest management plan you may want to check with your forester to see if herbicide use can complement planned harvesting activities. You may also want to check with your local NRCS office to see if you qualify for cost-share and technical assistance.

What kinds of Wildlife Habitat management can be accomplished using herbicides Some examples are:

Old-field renovation and restoration- apply recommended herbicide solution with water before seed heads mature and then over seed with desired grass/legume mixture, native seed mixtures or let native plants re-vegetate naturally.

Release of desired wildlife trees and shrubs – foliar spray unwanted plants with recommended solution in water during growing season. Mid-August treatments use less chemical to achieve desired results.

Food plot site prep - treats all vegetation with foliar spray and then apply seed of your desired species. If tillage is required wait 7 days after application for translocation to roots of treated vegetation.

Control invasive/non-native plants - same procedure as above. Invasive plants commonly controlled are Japanese barberry, multiflora rose, Russian olive, autumn olive, glossy and common buckthorn and most honeysuckles. Be sure of your plant identification.

*The author is a Certified Wildlife Biologist and a licensed Commercial Master Applicator.