

TIMELY INFORMATION

Agriculture & Natural Resources

Control Options for Chinese Privet



Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*) is a serious problem for many homeowners, farmers, foresters, and land managers in Alabama. Many control efforts are done incorrectly or are short lived if follow up is not performed. This sheet provides the technical specs on treatment options. For detailed information on specific herbicide treatment techniques consult the Timely Information Series on herbicide techniques available at: <http://www.aces.edu/timelyinfo/#Agronomy>.

Hand pulling or weed wrenching: Privet seedlings and young stems can often be hand pulled, especially in moist bottomland hardwood soils. However, privet spreads by creeping roots and the stems from root sprouts can rarely be pulled up.

Grasp small privet stems by the base and pull upward. If they do not easily come up, hand pulling cannot be done. Weed wrenching is another hand method that works on single stemmed privet less than two to three inches in diameter. Because privet has a shallow fibrous root system that often holds large chunks of soil, hand pulling is not recommended along stream banks or other areas where erosion may be of concern.

Mowing or cutting: Because privet will rapidly resprout from the stump and roots, mowing or cutting alone do not provide satisfactory control. Mowing may also result in a large flush of new seedlings along with the resprouts.

Brush grinders: Brush grinding is another mechanical option that has shown considerable promise. Brush grinders can grind all sizes of privet and often leave a thick mulch layer that may reduce privet seedling germination. Brush grinders do not remove the root system so expect some resprouting to occur. However, there is some evidence that brush grinding destroys the root collar of many privet stems and may reduce stump resprouting.

Foliar herbicide treatment: Privet control with most pasture herbicides is variable when sprayed on the foliage. For many applications, glyphosate is the most effective treatment. Here are the specifics: Use a glyphosate product with a minimum of 41% active ingredient. DO NOT use glyphosate formulations that are “Ready to Use” (RTU) because they do not contain enough glyphosate to be effective. Make sure the glyphosate product you choose has a good surfactant or add a non-ionic surfactant (NIS) at 0.5% v/v. Mix a 3-5 % solution (4-6 fluid ounces per gallon) of the glyphosate product with water and NIS (0.5 fluid ounces per gallon) if needed. Coverage of the



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terminal growing point is critical. Spray to wet the foliage but not to runoff. Tall privet sprayed only on the sides will not be killed. If the privet is taller than 6-8 feet, then consider using other methods such as brush grinding, basal bark, or cut stump treatment. The optimal timing for application is late fall to early winter when nights are cold but day temperatures rise into the 50s and 60s. Summer treatments are not as effective. Glyphosate may cause injury to other species, but during the late fall and winter when most other vegetation is dormant the risk is greatly reduced.

Cut stump herbicide treatment: Use a 25% v/v glyphosate or triclopyr amine concentrate herbicide (minimum 41% active ingredient) with a NIS at 0.5%v/v mixed in water. DO NOT use glyphosate formulations that are ready to use (RTU) because they do not contain enough glyphosate to be effective. Cut privet stems low to the ground, quickly remove any sawdust accumulation on the stump and IMMEDIATELY (within 30 seconds if possible) spray or paint the entire surface of each stem with the herbicide solution. Spray to wet, but do not puddle the herbicide around the stump.



If herbicide treatment must be delayed following cutting, a different approach should be used. Use an oil soluble herbicide (triclopyr ester) at 20% v/v in an oil carrier or use a triclopyr ester RTU cut stump/basal bark herbicide and spray the entire stump top **and** the sides of the stump. This treatment can be done for several weeks following cutting. Both water and oil based cut stump treatments work on any size privet but it is critical to treat every cut stem. Untreated cut stems will resprout. Cut stump treatments can be done any time of year but late fall is the easiest from an operational standpoint.

Basal bark herbicide treatment: For basal bark treatment, use an oil soluble herbicide (triclopyr ester) at 20% v/v in an oil carrier or use a triclopyr ready to use (RTU) cut stump/basal bark herbicide. Spray the entire circumference of the bottom 12-15 inches of each stem. Spray to wet, but not to the point of runoff. This treatment may take several months to fully work but is extremely effective on privet.



Followup treatments: In reality, you will likely need to do aggressive follow up treatments in the year following your first treatment. Follow up is necessary to control new privet seedlings and the root resprouts that will inevitably occur. Foliar spot herbicide treatment is the easiest follow up approach. *It is critical to do follow up.* If skipped, privet can rapidly reinfest a site and the initial treatment investment will be lost.

Authors: Stephen Enloe and Nancy Loewenstein

Questions? Contact your local Alabama Cooperative Extension Office. www.aces.edu