Choosing the Right Chemical Applicator

Brad Withrow-Robinson is the OSU Extension agent for Benton, Linn, and Polk counties.

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 before 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.

**Helpful resources**

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

- *Contracts for Woodland Owners* (EC 1192)

- *PNW Weed Management Handbook*
  [https://pnwhandbooks.org/weed](https://pnwhandbooks.org/weed)

- *Oregon’s Forest Protections Laws: An Illustrated Manual*, Oregon Forest Resources Institute
  [http://oregonforests.org/node/176](http://oregonforests.org/node/176)

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Key questions to ask potential applicators

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. Do they keep up with the latest in 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.

■ Ask about the types of application they can do and what equipment they use.

■ Ask who will provide the chemicals for the job.

■ Ask if they will submit the “Notice of Operation” to the Oregon Department of Forestry for the application.

Where do you look for a chemical applicator?

The list of individuals and firms who can handle your chemical application needs is continually 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

■ Ask a forester.

■ Oregon Tree Farm System: www.otfs.org

■ 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

Where to look for a chemical applicator

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Who will provide the chemicals for the job?

What types of application can I hire and what equipment do they use?

■ Clear what part of the job you are going to do and what you are having done.

■ Clarify what services you are looking for, so you can determine whether the operator has the knowledge, equipment, and staff needed for the job.

■ Does the operator have the necessary training to do the job? Are they up to date with worker protection standards?

■ Ask if their licensing and experience qualify them to develop spray prescriptions.

■ Ask about the types of application they can do and what equipment they use.

■ Ask who will provide the chemicals for the job.

■ Ask if they will submit the “Notice of Operation” to the Oregon Department of Forestry for the application.

■ Ask about the level of insurance they carry, if that is appropriate for your job.

■ 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 workforce (number and size of crews), their experience, and certification levels. Ask if they will be able to finish your job within the desired time frame?

■ Ask what types of maps, photo maps, or the ground itself, do they need from you?

■ Ask your neighbors to recommend chemical applicators who have done a good job for them.

■ Ask about the initial costs, so you can budget accordingly.

■ Ask about the dollar value of the operation. What is the value of the operation? What are the cost implications of the job?

■ Ask about the need for permits and who will handle them.

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