

IMPACT OF RHODODENDRON PONTICUM

"Although it possesses attractive flowers *R. ponticum* has few attributes that offset the negative impact it can have on an invaded site. It has been shown to reduce the numbers of earthworms, birds and plants and regenerative capacity of a site, leading to a reduction in the biodiversity of the area.

"Physical access to a site can be reduced by the density and size of mature bushes, and management costs then rise as the bushes need to be treated prior to other activities being carried out. Established bushes then act as a seed source for further invasions in adjacent areas, eradicating ground cover plants and interfering with the process of natural regeneration of trees." Forestry Commission

LEVER & MULCH

Lever and Mulch was developed in the West Highlands of Scotland by Gordon French and Donald Kennedy of Morvern Community Woodlands. In 2004 Achnaha Wood was the first major site to be treated using this novel method. The ground flora there is flourishing as the woody 'mulch' piles of rhododendron stems decompose and subside, the nutrients they contain being gradually incorporated into the woodland soil. There has been almost no subsequent new growth, from bud or seed.

Lever and Mulch has been used with promising results at several other sites, including Inverie on the Knoydart peninsula, where teams of volunteers have been trained in the method. Now it is imperative that many more volunteers and professionals should be trained, so that *Rhododendron ponticum* - acknowledged to be an injurious invasive species by the Forestry Commission, DEFRA and other statutory bodies - can be eliminated, at least from the places where it is doing most harm.

"The Lever and Mulch method is a highly effective, efficient and relatively inexpensive technique for eradicating *Rhododendron ponticum*." Highland Council, Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

"I would recommend implementing the Lever & Mulch method on a large scale to tackle rhododendron as soon as it is practical." Jessica Hodges, University of Edinburgh.

"Those of us who have seen Lever & Mulch in action are convinced that it has advantages over conventional methods to the extent that we deem it to be the most effective, most eco-friendly, safest, easiest, quickest and also, therefore, the cheapest." Dr James Merryweather, Skye & Lochalsh Environment Forum.

LEVER & MULCH

revolutionary method for the eradication of rhododendron

designed by
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PROBLEM? WHAT PROBLEM?

full discussion of the rhododendron problem and Lever & Mulch
CD or free download (~60MB) at: www.slef.org.uk

Information about LEVER & MULCH contact:

www.morverncommunitywoodlands.org.uk





LEVERING A STEM



HAMMERING BUDS BEFORE MULCHING

THE METHOD (briefly*): Dressed in appropriate protective clothing, trained practitioners carefully assesses a bush's susceptibilities before systematically dismantling it, using nothing more than gloved hands, booted feet, body weight, hammer, saw and Lever & Mulch specific skills (*right*).

STEMS ARE LEVERED from the basal crown (*↑left*), often taking roots with them, but more importantly, removing all or most of the buds, which are the bush's potential for re-growth. Remains of root crowns can be macerated with a hammer (*↓left*), before being mulched with leaves and brash. Regrowth is rare after L&M treatment. Most brash is left to lie close to where it grew, all across the site, so there is no further handling, dragging or burning (often a huge biomass), and seedling establishment is inhibited across the site wherever dying brash forms even a thin mulch layer. Fire damage to local native vegetation, soils and organisms is avoided. Structure and cover (albeit dead) remains for birds and animals. Sequestered nutrients stay on site, gradually to return to the soil for recycling. Since no herbicide is used, native vegetation recovers quickly.

FOLLOW-UP: Sites are re-visited the following season when seedlings are pulled and any remaining nascent or newly sprouted buds are hammered to oblivion.

THAT'S IT!

nearly all rhododendrons at any L&M treated site will be DEAD

To be fully effective (any method), sites need to be checked and worked over for several years to ensure total eradication. This is minimised on LEVER & MULCH sites, where both seedlings and regrowth are always sparse.

All sites, especially sensitive ecosystems, will benefit from this efficient, green way of eliminating rhododendrons.

RHODODENDRON CONTROL is an urgent concern. Lever & Mulch is a highly effective solution, but its success will depend on administrators, landowners, site managers, conservationists and contractors all becoming aware of and accepting the method, and training a substantial workforce.

* Full details are provided in the L&M Practice Guide and associated publications. www.morverncommunitywoodlands.org.uk



PROTECTIVE CLOTHING, HELMET WITH VISOR, TWO PRUNING SAWS AND A HAMMER