



Appointing a Contractor

In most instances, the management of *Rhododendron ponticum* will be undertaken by professional qualified staff or contractors with the necessary skills and experience in that field of work. The process of appointing a contractor will vary, depending on whether the work is being done privately, or on behalf of an organisation, in which case there are likely to be procurement protocols to follow. However, as a minimum standard, it is recommended that the following steps are taken:

1.1 Ensuring the contractor(s) have the relevant qualifications and expertise:

The qualification(s) required will vary, depending on the control method being utilised:

- Hand-weeding: no formal qualification required, but proof of previous experience may be advantageous.
- Manual cutting and burning: anyone who will be using a chainsaw should be suitably qualified to do so. As a minimum, this should include a Level 2 qualification in Chainsaw Maintenance and Cross-cutting (LANTw19 and LANTw20 – previously CS 30.1 and 30.2) and Felling and Processing Trees up to 380mm (LANTw20 – previously CS 31), or equivalent qualifications from other recognised awarding bodies.
- Manual cutting and chipping: as above, although an appropriate qualification in the use of manual chippers will also be required, for example, the NPTC Level 2 Certificate of Competence in Manually Fed Wood Chipper Operations.
- Chemical control (stem treatment/foiar spraying): any contractor appointed to manage *R. ponticum* with chemicals using a foliar spraying technique should hold both Level 2 Award in the Safe Use of Pesticides (PA1) and Safe Use and Handling of Pesticides Using Handheld Applicators (PA6) qualifications. If spraying near watercourses, the appointed contractor should also have undertaken an additional module in applying pesticides in or near water (PA6W). With regards to stem-treatment, an additional qualification for using Handheld Pesticide Injection Equipment (PA6INJ) is advantageous, however there are several different stem-treatment techniques which do not require the use of a hand-held applicator.
- Use of ropes for access: where the work is judged to require the use of ropes for access or safety reasons, additional qualifications are required. All contractors working off the ground should hold qualifications from a recognised awarding body, for example, the City and Guilds NPTC Level 2 Award in Accessing a Tree Using Rope and Harness (002007) and Level 2 Award in Tree Climbing and Rescue (002013) (or similar qualifications from other awarding bodies). For more complicated or higher risk jobs where anchoring onto a tree is not possible, it is advised that appointed contractors also hold an additional IRATA Rope Access Technician qualification (Level 1 as a minimum). The additional risk of carrying out the work at height should also be included in the risk assessment completed prior to beginning the work.



- Mechanical mulching/flailing: any contractors operating a mechanical mulcher/flail should hold a relevant qualification, for example the City and Guilds NPTC Level 2 Award in Forest Machine Operations – Flail/Mulcher (QAN 600/9113/7).

It is also highly recommended that appointed contractors have an up-to-date and appropriate outdoor First Aid qualification which includes an additional Forestry element (FAW + F).

Asking for proof of experience is a personal choice and can be done in several ways, both formally, and informally. Informal methods might be to ask others within the community, your own organisation, or other organisations you work with, whether they are aware of the contractors and of the quality of their work. You may also wish to ask the contractors themselves for examples of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) management work they have previously undertaken. If a more formal approach is required, for example, as part of a tender scored using a predefined matrix, then you could stipulate in the advertisement that all tenders submitted must be accompanied by a written CV which includes a section on previous experience, or written references from previous clients.

5.2 Tendering Process:

In many instances, it is advised that more than one quote is obtained (recommended minimum of three) for undertaking the work as prices can often vary substantially between contractors. This is often a necessity for public sector and many third sector organisations, who will be required to follow specific procurement rules.

Applications can be assessed by comparing prices alone. However, it is advised that other criteria are taken into consideration, especially for the more complicated or costly jobs. These additional criteria may include the quality of their risk assessment and method statement, examples of similar previous experience in managing IAS, and written references. Method statements will vary depending on the site and its requirements, however, all method statements should serve as a step-by-step guide of how the work will be completed safely using the measures identified in the risk assessment. Method statements are also useful to ensure the contractors and contract manager are in agreement over what needs to be achieved prior to starting the work, whilst also serving as a criteria against which the work can be assessed when complete. Table 5.1. shows an example of a simple scoring matrix which may be used to assess tender applications. Those commissioning the work may amend the respective criteria and their weighting to meet their own requirements.



Table 5.1. Simple scoring matrix for assessing tenders.

Criteria	Weighting (%)	Score (out of 5)
Price	50	
Quality of Risk Assessment and Method Statement	30	
Previous experience (including written references)	20	
Total	100	

The cost of undertaking *R. ponticum* management will vary between sites, depending on several factors such as the topography and ease of access, the size and density of *R. ponticum* present, the method of control, and any other specific requirements stated in the contract. However, based on several years' experience of commissioning *R. ponticum* control, Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA) have developed a *Rhododendron Calculator* which aims to give an approximate cost for managing a site (per hectare) based on the density of *R. ponticum* present and the nature of the terrain at the site (flat, moderate and steep ground). Please note that the cost calculator makes many assumptions and does not take into consideration site specific factors such as the additional cost of rope access or chipping. Consequently, it should be used as an approximate guide for costings only. A copy of the cost calculator can be found as an Appendix at the end of this information note.

1.3 Risk Assessments

Prior to commencing any work on a site, both site-specific and job-specific risk assessments should be completed. These may be undertaken by the person/organisation commissioning the work, the contractor, or a combination of both. In most instances, the person/organisation commissioning the work will undertake the site-specific risk assessment (as they will often know the site better and have access to information relating to constraints on GIS systems), whilst the contractor will complete the job specific risk assessment (as they are responsible for delivering the work and operating any machinery). However, the person/organisation responsible for commissioning the work should take overall responsibility for all aspects of the work, and it is recommended that they request a copy of the job specific risk assessment from the contractor to be kept on file.

In addition to site and job specific risk assessments relating to aspects of health and safety, it is advised that a biosecurity risk assessment be completed. This is covered in more detail in Section 4 – Ecological Considerations.



5.4 Insurance

Any contractor appointed to control *R. ponticum* should have both Public and Employers Liability Insurance to a minimum of £2 million.

5.5 Record keeping

Prior to awarding any contract, it is recommended that any documents submitted by the contractor during the tendering process are kept on file for auditing purposes. Before commencing work, the contractor should be asked to provide copies of the signed contract, risk assessment and method statement, insurance certificates, and certificates for any relevant qualifications required for carrying out the work. Upon completion of each phase of work, the contractor must provide an herbicide record sheet (if any chemicals were used) along with the invoice. All of the above documents should be received before any payment is authorised.

