



Rhododendron Management Guide

(*Rhododendron ponticum*)

Rhododendron thrives on well drained acid soils with a preference for mild damp climates. Its thick leaves and evergreen nature mean that it casts deep shade and thus inhibits growth of ground flora. It thrives both in sunshine and shade and can grow in low light levels. Young plants grow slowly, with only a single stem present for approximately 10 years. Leaves are arranged spirally along the stem and as the plant matures, the leaves grow in whorls. After about 10 years (or earlier if the plant has been damaged), the plant becomes multi-stemmed.



Rhododendron has a preference for acidic soils with a pH of 3.6-6.6 and is not affected by drought or frost. Seeds are deposited from December onwards and can spread up to 1km away from the parent plant. Mature plants can produce 1 million seeds annually. Seedlings need a water source and therefore will not survive on dense leaf litter or dense vegetation. Low moss carpet, bare soil and dead wood are ideal germination grounds for seedlings.

Rhododendron can form very dense thickets which prevent access to fields because of its sheer mass. It out-competes native plants for resources such as sunlight and space. It is poisonous to livestock.

The North Connemara Locally Led Agri Environmental Scheme advises following guidance from the National Parks and Wildlife Service when removing rhododendron. A video demonstrating how to treat rhododendron can be found at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3JeZUTBSO8Y>.

Rhododendron needs to be controlled systematically. Results will not be visible immediately after treating and treatment may be planned in stages over a number of years where there is significant infestation.

The North Connemara Locally Led Agri Environmental Scheme recommends using this method of treatment because when carried out correctly:

1. Treatment can be carried out in all weathers
2. Treatment can be carried out at any time of year
3. Minimal amounts of chemical herbicide are used
4. The equipment needed is easy to use and light to carry
5. It has proven results

A 14% glyphosate solution is recommended (1:7 herbicide to water).

A cut is made in the stem &/or branches of the plant using either a drill, a hatchet or a chainsaw, making sure to cut below the bark in order to ensure that the herbicide enters the plant's transport system.

Larger plants require multiple cuts. A chainsaw is preferable for large plants and a hatchet for smaller plants.

Make sure to make the cuts below the lowest growing branch on the plant.

If the plant is multi-stemmed, it is important to treat each branch separately. It may be necessary to cut away some



outer branches in order to gain access to the centre of the plant. If doing so, make sure to treat the cut stumps with herbicide also.

When treated, leave the plant to die. If treated in the winter, the leaves will not fall off the tree until the following summer.

The deliberate planting of rhododendron is an offence under No. 477/2011 - European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 which states "any person who plants, disperses, allows or causes to disperse, spreads or otherwise causes to grow in any place specified in relation to such plant in the third column of Part 1 of the Third Schedule, any plant which is included in Part 1 of the Third Schedule, shall be guilty of an offence."

