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MAINTENANCE

- Assess fire safety compliance
- Monitor drainage ditches and culverts
- Protect frost sensitive plants

PLANTING

- Direct seed cool season, annual wildflowers and grasses
- Bulbs for spring blooms

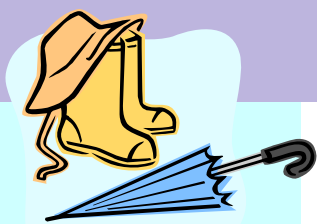
Thinning, Brushing and Fire "Safe-ing"

Well, it's that time of year and winter is upon us. The latest storms have defoliated most of our deciduous trees. Besides raking up the leaves around the house and cleaning out the rain gutters (don't forget), it is an excellent time for brush control and making your property fire safe.

Thinning

When thinning your property, inventory your diseased trees, leaning trees, trees obstructing power lines, trees that pose a danger from blowing over and causing damage. Also consider areas you may want to open up for cultural practices. Thin to remove the competition from each other, thereby releasing the desired tree(s) for healthier and quicker growth. Remove ladder fuel, the lower (dead or alive) branches as high as you can reach, this opens up the stand, and also improves the ability for fire protection. Normally, we do not remove more than 1/3 of the total branches of the tree. By removing the ladder fuel, a grass fire under the trees will not have the ability to move into the canopy. Canopy fires can cause a very hot, fast moving and uncontrollable fire.





Addressing Mistletoe while Thinning ...

Diseased trees with mistletoe could be oak trees as well as conifer trees. If only a few mistletoe boughs are on the tree limbs, there are several ways to treat this parasite.

If the leaves beyond the mistletoe are still green and viable you may be able to save the branch.

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Mistletoe is spread from tree to tree by birds, squirrels and by branches that overhang each other.



For chemical control, use "Floral" labeled for mistletoe and used during the dormant season. (Talk to the nurserymen you buy it from or a certified Arborist and follow the label exactly).



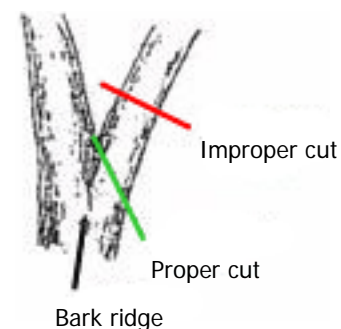
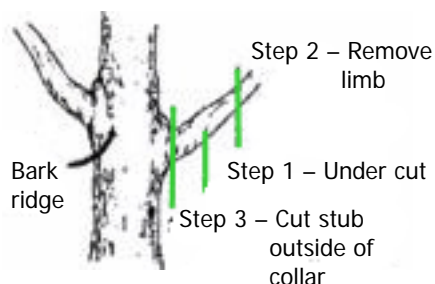
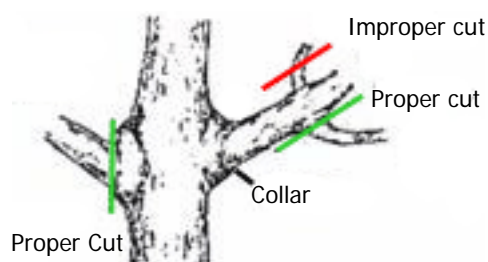
For mechanical control, knock off the bough. Wrap the branch covering where the bough was and back toward the trunk a foot or two. Mistletoe like all plants must have sunlight for photosynthesis to feed itself and survive. The Mistletoe intercepts the water that is going out to the leaves of the tree. If wrapping is done, I would use the weed barrier cloth we use for gardens. This cloth allows air and water through, but cuts out the light necessary photosynthesis.

If you don't mind losing the branch, you can cut the branch off, back a foot or two towards the tree trunk, to healthy tissue. Be sure to use proper pruning cuts to maintain the health of the tree.

If the tree is full of mistletoe including on the main trunk of the tree, it is a candidate for removal.

Remember, if you ignore the mistletoe then you have a source of infection for the healthy trees on your property.

Tree Pruning 101



Brushing

Before you start brushing, take into consideration that some brush can have valuable browse characteristics. You also want to leave some of the natural vegetation for wildlife habitat.

If you do want to remove brush, there are several approaches:

Mechanical Removal



Grubbing it out using hand methods or tractors is possible. There are many species that will resprout requiring yearly follow up.

Note: When cutting trees and large shrubs be sure to leave a foot or two of the trunk standing. This will give you something to wrap a chain around or for the tractor to push on if you want to remove the stumps as well.



Professional masticators are now available that can come in and grind up the vegetation leaving a thick mulch behind.

Chemical Removal



The vegetation can be sprayed a couple weeks prior to cutting to minimize the regrowth potential.

Note: You need to contact a Licensed Pest Control Specialist in this field for the correct recommendations. There are often several chemicals that are labeled for your target weed. Each chemical may be different formulations, and act better at different times of the year. Therefore, if you want the best results, you should get professional help with this.

Getting rid of your cuttings does not need to be expensive or difficult. There are some free chipping programs available. Contact your closest fire station and/or fire safe council for information (see sidebar).

Regional Fire Safe Councils

Fire Safe Council
of Nevada County
(530) 272-1122

Placer County Fire Safe
Alliance
(530) 823-5687
ext. 116 or 118

Fire Safe Council of
Eldorado County
(530) 647-1098

Yuba Watershed
Protection and Fire Safe
Council
(530) 749-2316

Sierra County Fire Safe
and Watershed Council



Replanting

Remember, we can kill anything, but the goal is to have a plan for planting something that will be desirable to you and will provide competition for the weed you are eradicating. Disturbed, bare soil is an open invitation for noxious weeds.

It often requires an onsite investigation in order to determine your best replanting options. The climate, elevation, target weed and management capabilities are all needed to be taken into account. But if grass is desired, the heaviest sod forming and readily available perennial grasses are Pubescent Wheatgrass (for dry-land) and Tall Fescue (for sub-irrigated). We sometimes recommend a nurse crop of Zorro Fescue (an early maturing annual).

Fire "Safe-ing"

Fred Lopez, Fire Captain from the California Department of Forestry gave a presentation to the Ag 118 "Ranch Development and Management" class at Sierra College, December 2. He talked about making your property fire safe and the responsibilities of the landowner.

To protect you, your livestock, your neighbors, and the natural resources, these are the new requirements for landowners. These codes also cover the new defensible space distances required around your home and structures. Use the CDF's "Make your Home Fire Safe - Quick Checklist" to make sure your property is in compliance with state guidelines.



EVENTS

Online registration for **Ag 118 – Ranch Development & Management Course @ Nevada County Campus**

[Fruit Tree Pruning Workshop and Demonstration – Dec 9th](#)

[Establishing and Caring for a Backyard Vineyard – Dec 10th](#)

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**Make your
Rural Property
Fire Safe
Use the new
CDF
[Quick Checklist](#)**

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Around your home and outbuildings . . .

The following excerpt is from the [“Public Resources Code 4291”](#).

“(a) Maintain around and adjacent to the building or structure a firebreak made by removing and clearing away, for a distance of not less than 30 feet on each side of the building or structure or to the property line, whichever is nearer, all flammable vegetation or other combustible growth. This subdivision does not apply to single specimens of trees, ornamental shrubbery, or similar plants that are used as ground cover, if they do not form a means of rapidly transmitting fire from the native growth to any building or structure.

(b) Maintain around and adjacent to the building or structure additional fire protection of firebreak made by removing all brush, flammable vegetation, or combustible growth that is located within 100 feet from the building or structure or to the property line or at a greater distance if required by state law, or local ordinance, rule, or regulation. This section does not prevent an insurance company that insures a building or structure from requiring the owner of the building or structure to maintain a firebreak of more than 100 feet around the building or structure. Grass and other vegetation located more than 30 feet from the building or structure and less than 18 inches in height above the ground may be maintained where necessary to stabilize the soil and prevent erosion.”

For a more complete index of existing fire laws, contact your closest CDF fire station and/or fire safe counsel for more help and assistance.

Please See page 3 for contact information.

Profiled Event

Get out your 2006 calendar and write in the [2006 Stockton Ag Expo & Family Ranch Show](#). You won't want to miss this 30th Anniversary Event.

- Date:** January 19th thru 21st
- Location:** San Joaquin County Fairgrounds
- Hours:** 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Thursday, January 19
9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Friday, January 20
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Saturday, January 21
- Admission:** \$5 Adults, \$2 Children (6-12) and **FREE** parking!

The Three R's of Defensible Space

- Remove
- Reduce
- Replant

Connect with
other Rural
Property
owners in
Nevada and
Placer
counties!
[Here is how.](#)



Weed of the Month

Contact Us

Phone:
530.269.1217

E-Mail:
keith@kcrabtree.com
paul@kcrabtree.com



*Helping you manage
your Green Acres*

Hedge Parsley a.k.a. Velco Plant

Latin Name: Torilis arvensis

Description: Annual Herb, Upright growth, 10 inches to 30 inches tall, Parsley like leaves, White or Pinkish flowers arranged in umbels bloom March through July (depending on elevation) and are followed by namesake ¼" Velcro-like seeds (burrs), non-native, noxious invasive.

Where would I find it? Found in oak woodlands throughout California and is becoming more and more prevalent throughout the counties of the Sierra Foothills This plant prefers dry, sunny to partly shaded, edge lands, weedy creek sides, waste areas and especially disturbed places like roadsides, new construction areas and abandoned disturbed fields. Hedge Parsley (Velcro Plant) is not fussy about soils, with the exception of serpentine, but shows a distinct preference to clay based soils. It has been found in elevations ranging from near sea level to 3,000ft.

Where did it come from and how does it spread? Native to Europe and South Western Asia. Believed to have been introduced to California, in the early 1900's, from England. Seeds spread by direct contact with animals, birds and people brushing into and through the plants themselves. The seeds are difficult to remove once attached to a carrier and may be transported over great distances.

What problems does it cause? More of a nuisance than a large scale problem. The seeds are difficult to remove from clothing and domestic animals. The plant is also quick to sprout in new plantings of both pasture & row crops and can become a problem weed in both areas, if allowed to become established. Toxicity to humans and livestock is unknown. This plant is closely related to wild carrot and is in the parsley family (see plants of the *Apiaceae* family for more possible details)

How can I get rid of it? Though this plant can become the dominant plant in a given area, it is not considered to be a very strong competitor and is usually a secondary plant that is able to effectively live in and amongst other grasses and shrubbery. This plant has an advantage over many of its competitors in that it will germinate quickly with the first fall & winter rains and will thus be established, via taproot, by the time most other plants are just breaking from dormancy. Mechanical or chemical removal of seedlings would be best, if possible. [Here is a photo detail of the typical seedling.](#) Treating foliage with glyphosate or triclopyr is effective if done early in their growth or on resprouts after cutting. Monitor site for additional seedlings. Please take the time to consult with a weed control specialist for further advice and planning.

Interesting fact: This plant is considered a highly desirable wildflower in England and due to the decline of this plant in the wild, over the last 20 years, it is now currently protected under the U.K.'s Wildlife and Countryside Act

[Have you seen this noxious invasive weed on your property?](#)

(This link will open a detailed photo identification gallery)