



**oakbank**  
CREATING THE PERFECT HABITAT

## Young Woodland Weeding Guidance Note

The health and vitality of woodland trees relies on effective management in order for the woodlands themselves to thrive and to provide the wide range of social, economic and environmental functions required of them.

Immediately after planting weeding is the most important element in giving your trees the right start, after rain that is, which we can do little about. Keeping a 1 metre diameter weed free environment around each tree for the first 2-3 years will reduce competition for moisture, nutrients and light. Failure to control weeds represents one of the single most important factors leading to tree loss.



**There are three principle methods of woodland planting weed control:**

- 1. Mechanical**
- 2. Chemical**
- 3. Suppression - Mulching**



**oakbank**  
CREATING THE PERFECT HABITAT

1. **Mechanical:** Mechanical weed control such as mowing is effective for reducing weed size to prevent smothering of your young trees and so that they don't get lost, but this does not combat water and nutrient competition, and can actually increase it by actively encouraging the weeds to grow stronger. Mowing has little long-term effect against grasses but may be effective against some annual herbaceous species. Therefore, mechanical weed control should be used in conjunction with one of the following total weed control methods.
2. **Chemical Weed Control:** Herbicides are usually the most cost-effective way of long-term weed control but if misused they carry a greater environmental and pollution risk which has to be taken into account. Pre-emptive control is usually more successful with herbicide treatments than trying to deal with a weed problem once it has arisen. Spray around the base of each tree to create a weed-free area, approximately 1m in diameter. To maintain a weed free environment, 2 applications a year are necessary, late spring and then late summer depending on the growing season. As with all pesticides, take care when applying and be careful not to touch the tree with the chemical. You must adhere to all instructions and guidance around its use. Herbicide selection will be dependent on target weed species present on site. Some people may wish not to use herbicides and so the mulching options below are better suited to their needs.





**oakbank**  
CREATING THE PERFECT HABITAT

- Mulching:** Mulching incurs greater up-front expense as it is fairly labour intensive to import and distribute around every tree. However, as well as reducing weed competition for moisture and nutrients, mulching provides the added benefits of aiding moisture retention in hot conditions and act as a frost guard in very cold conditions.



Mulching around individual trees up to 1 metre diameter with bark or similar organic material is incredibly effective if installed early on or when weeds are very short. Apply it to a depth of 10 - 15cm to prevent it being blown away or dispersed by birds and mammals, and it may need to be topped up to ensure complete tree establishment by years 3-5. If using wood chip rather than pure bark material, ensure it is well broken down / composted and has not come from wood material infected by fungal pathogens.

Mulch mats are available which are pegged down around the tree to keep them in place and act very similarly to mulch material as described above. However, these offer less frost protection and as they tend to contain a plastic element, they often require uplifting and disposing of after tree establishment.

