

## Control weeds in Christmas tree plantings

NEWARK, Del. — Christmas trees offer a potential cash crop for part-time farmers and people with small land holdings in semi-urban areas. One of the problems in establishing such plantings is weed control — especially during the first few years after trees are planted.

Weed control is also a major problem for operators of nurseries. High labor costs make chemicals

the only practical means of control for both kinds of enterprise.

University of Delaware Extension horticulturist Charles Dunham has been evaluating potential herbicides for their effectiveness and safety on plants. The information he collects is being used to help clear promising materials for use on such ornamental crops under the Environmental Protection Agency's

special IR-4 program.

"There aren't very many effective herbicide treatments currently available for Christmas tree growers to use at planting," says Dunham. "As coarse weeds get ahead of young trees, it becomes almost impossible to remove them without resorting to a contact herbicide."

Last summer he says he got excellent results on white pine,

Norway spruce and Douglas fir with a combination of several herbicides, including Princep, a product not presently labeled for use on ornamentals at planting.

Princep was applied immediately after planting in combination with either Goal or Deverinal. Spray formulations included either 1 pint of Goal or 2 pounds Deverinal (active ingredients) with several different rates of Princep.

At the 1 pound rate, Princep, in combination with these materials caused no plant injury to ornamentals growing on either sandy soil at the university's Georgetown Substation, or the heavier soils of the experimental farm in Newark. Materials were applied over the top immediately after planting on weed-free ground.

Though results were promising, Dunham thinks it is very important that the soil be well firmed around plants if they are to resist herbicide injury. This is easier to do if you're planting by hand, rather than by machine.

In a related demonstration, Dunham has been evaluating the effectiveness of the Herbi sprayer as a low-cost, low-labor means of applying herbicides on nursery stock, including Christmas trees.

Advantages of the sprayer are that it applies very low volumes of material per acre. This means that with one filling, you can cover a large number of trees. The equipment is light and easy to handle.

"I think the Herbi has a place in

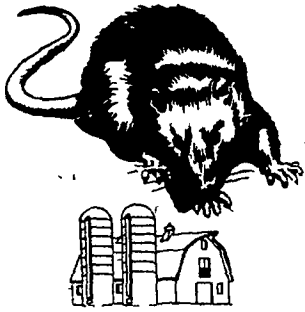
ornamental production," he says. "The main disadvantage we encountered was that the volume put out is so low that it's hard to realize you're putting any material on." This poses a psychological problem for the person doing the spraying in the sense that it may seem that the job isn't getting done. You have to be careful not to over-treat.

Tests showed that the sprayer is effective in applying flowable pre-emergence herbicides such as Princep, Deverinal, Goal and Lasso. It is also very effective in applying post-emergence materials such as Roundup. Roundup cannot be used where foliar contact is a potential cause of injury.

All indications are that despite the low volume of water applied per acre, the effectiveness of the materials is much the same as when comparable rates of herbicides are applied by other methods, says Dunham. He feels the Herbi offers a very efficient low-cost method of applying weed-control chemicals. Being hand held, it can be used in areas difficult to reach with mechanical equipment.

During the past two years, Dunham has worked on weed control problems encountered the previous year. Using spring-planted Norway spruce, Douglas fir, white pine and Colorado spruce, he has been able to find the most effective control and rates of herbicide application on young trees of these species.

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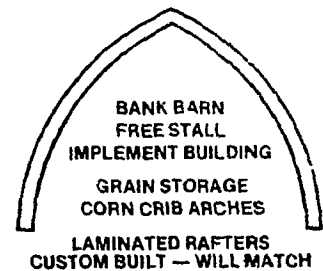
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