

# VOLUNTEERS CLEARING INVASIVE TREES AND SHRUBS

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Take first aid kit and mobile phone if possible.
- Wear strong boots and gloves and goggles if necessary.
- Do not work alone.
- Forres Community Woodlands Trust need to have agreed to the work you are doing.
- You must have notified FCWT of any condition that may influence your ability to work safely.
- Take waterproofs and layers of clothing so you can regulate body temperature.
- Have water etc. available to avoid dehydration.
- Remember correct use of and carrying of tools.
- Keep at a safe distance from each other and the public when working and be particularly aware of risks to eyes and back - demonstration required.
- Check for ticks before and after returning home. Ticks should be removed immediately using a tick remover. Be aware that ticks can remain on clothing for some time. Refer to relevant literature.
- Take sun block for use at appropriate times of year.

## WORK

- **Sitka and hemlock** are unlikely to regrow if cut to ground level or very near, using bowsaws or loppers. Cutting at low level also removes trip hazard. Ensure that no green shoots are left or they will regrow.
- Only the smallest **rhododendron and laurel** saplings should be pulled by volunteers. Ensure that the root is removed, and take care not to strain your back. Do not cut, as they will re-grow. Any more mature plants will require specialist treatment by contractors usually including herbicide application.
- Try to deposit removed material on bracken areas or areas of low botanical or other value. Cut so it lays down well. Avoid laying on bilberries, heather or areas where native wildflowers are known to grow or where native trees have self-seeded or where dead wood is providing good habitat for invertebrates and fungi. Also take care to remove cuttings from paths.
- For removing **bracken** use shears or slashers. Cut or bruise between root level and tip. This should only be done when plants are young. There is a risk of cuts to hands caused by sharp stem fibres. Therefore, gloves should be worn when handling bracken. Do not pull. There is no evidence to suggest that bracken spores are carcinogenic if inhaled by humans, and it seldom produces spores in Scotland anyway.
- An **induction and on-site demonstrations** will be given prior to volunteers carrying out any work.

## OTHER EXOTIC SPECIES

At present we are usually leaving other non-native shrubs and trees including cotoneaster, flowering current, prickly heath, berberis, Lawson's cypress, noble fir, Douglas fir, grand fir and larch. These don't seem to be a problem at present and do have some value in providing useful food sources to wildlife at certain times. We may remove some of these at a later date as native plants re-establish themselves. We discourage sycamore invasion in some areas but research has indicated that it does fit into native ecosystems fairly well in some situations and supports a particularly large biomass of insects, useful to nesting birds. It is native to continental Europe including

northern France, a place that we share a lot of native animal and bird life with. In most areas this is being left at present.

**Report any giant hogweed found to FCWT. Do not touch as it is dangerous to do so.**

## INVASIVE NATIVES

**Broom, gorse and bracken** are often invasive. Although they can cause problems they also provide some habitat value. Gorse makes a good nest site for birds and is particularly useful to robins in the Sanquhar woods. These three plant species become much less dominant when shaded by trees, particularly the gorse which may disappear completely in shaded areas. We usually only clear these when they are causing a specific problem such as when overwhelming young trees which we have planted or if it is encroaching on grassland of good habitat, scenic or recreational value.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Avoid disturbance of nesting birds or other wildlife.
- Avoid disturbance or removal of vegetation where birds could be nesting between March and July and continue to take care outside of these times.
- Avoid areas around suspected nest sites in use.
- Avoid moving of large logs that have been in place for some time as this can cause life threatening disturbance to amphibians and other wildlife, particularly in winter.
- Bumblebees and wasps will often nest in the ground, in tree stumps and other places. Take care to avoid disturbing their nests for their sakes and particularly in the latter case yours as well.