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Vegetation Management in the City of Maple Valley FAQ

The City of Maple Valley continuously monitors and maintains roadside, parks, lakes, and facility access vegetation within the City limits. The City employs multiple methods to control vegetation growth where needed, including pruning, mowing, and spraying of herbicides where necessary.

Why do we manage vegetation?

Weeds and grasses along roadsides create a fire hazard in summer and fall, can obstruct drainage ditches, potentially limit driver visibility, and can lead to the deterioration of roads if left uncontrolled. Another reason the City provides roadside maintenance is to control the spread of noxious weeds. The City is required by state law to eradicate Class A weeds as well as contain other weeds as needed. To view the noxious list and their applicable laws

visit: <https://www.kingcounty.gov/services/environment/animals-and-plants/noxious-weeds/laws.aspx>

Vegetation in facility access ways are controlled to make sure gates and fences are accessible for maintenance and roads can be used by vehicles and machinery. In lakes, noxious weeds and nuisance plants are controlled to improve recreational uses.

How do we manage vegetation?

Multiple methods are used to control vegetation including pruning, mowing, and spraying of herbicides. City maintenance crews select the most effective method based on what needs to be removed and to what extent.

Mowing and mechanically pulling weeds and grasses is very labor intensive and the City employs only a small number of full time maintenance workers and seasonal workers who perform vegetation management as only a portion of their duties. Use of herbicides allows the City to efficiently remove all vegetation where necessary and use of herbicides in conjunction with growth inhibitors allows the City to perform less vegetation maintenance and spray fewer herbicides over time.

What herbicides do we use and when and how do we apply them?

The City typically uses a combination of Roundup, Crossbow, Trimec, and Caseron for vegetation management. Herbicides are only applied during dry weather and in compliance with all laws and regulations as well as in alignment with safety requirements on the product labels. The City only uses herbicides approved by the EPA and that are commercially available to the public.

Roadside and facility access

The City Public Works Department applies herbicides in a targeted method using a controlled, hand-held (backpack) sprayer that is aimed 4 to 6-inches off the ground so that it is applied to only specific areas. Herbicides are not sprayed into the air or on private property. All City of Maple Valley Public Works staff who oversee herbicide application in the field possess a Washington State pesticide applicators license.

Parks

The City Parks and Recreation Department has two full-time staff that are certified to apply herbicides and pesticides in the parks. Herbicides are spot applied where needed. If a large area needs application the staff will post signs to inform residents and park users what was applied and when. This happens very rarely since spot application works very well in the parks. Parks that are treated are Lake Wilderness, Take-a-break and Summit parks.

Staff take every precaution when applying herbicides and will avoid areas where there is a lot of activity.

Lakes

Under the Washington State Department of Ecology *Aquatic Plant and Algae Management National Pollution Discharge Elimination System and State Waste Discharge General Permit WAG994020*, certain approved herbicides are permitted for use in Lake Wilderness to remove non-native noxious water weeds and nuisance native waterweeds. The permit requires application must be done by an aquatic herbicide applicator licensed by Washington State Department of Agriculture. Only a select number of herbicides, approved by the Environmental Protection Agency and Washington State Department of Ecology, are allowed. The approved herbicides, strictly applied according to the product label, are not considered pollutants. The permit requires a public mailing for to all residents and business within ¼ mile of the treatment zone as well as shoreline postings before the application begins. For more information about the permit visit: <https://Ecology.wa.gov/AquaticPlants>.

Is the City considering changing herbicide use due to concerns about Roundup and the active ingredient Glyphosate?

The City is aware of the concerns about Roundup and Glyphosate and is looking into other options that are as effective and do not substantially increase the cost of removing vegetation. Currently, there is not an effective alternative to Glyphosate products on the market.

King County is currently evaluating their Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program, which includes policies on pesticide and herbicide use and they are considering alternatives to Glyphosate products. Because the County has more resources and ability to study the subject, the City of Maple Valley plans to wait until their evaluation is complete to review their recommendations and consider if the City should modify our practices.