Tips From The Treeman

DEAR TREEMAN, I attended one of the Forest Roads workshops sponsored by Oregon State University. One of the topics that came up was whether you should allow grass to grow on your rocked roads. The OSU forest engineer said no. but I tend to disagree. What's your opinion? - *Ben*

DEAR BEN, If your rocked road has a sufficient base, thus a durable and stable running surface, then grass is probably a bad thing. An active maintenance regime of grading and spot rocking/repair will keep vegetation on your road to a minimum. While many woodland owners have rocked roads. many of them do not possess a "durable and stable running surface."

A properly constructed rock road satisfies two issues. First, a rock surface provides traction for vehicles during the wet season. Oftentimes, this is the primary reason woodland owners have rock roads. They want to get from point A to point 8 any time of the year. Secondly, the rocked road provides traction AND the structural integrity to accommodate heavy equipment (i.e., log trucks). There are woodland owners out there who think that just because they can drive their pickup on a road during the wet season, that same road can serve as a venue for a 35 ton truck. Maybe, maybe not.

Without going into the detail of rock quality and size, you'll need approximately one foot of rock if it is to serve as an all-weather surface for all types of vehicles. Most woodland owners have not met this requirement. Many have "surface rock" rather than a durable and stable running surface." There is just enough rock to allow for traction, but not enough to allow for structural integrity. In this case, grass night not be such a bad thing. And we all agree grass can be a fire hazard and it is slick.


Steve Bowers

The shallow rock surface can be more vulnerable to erosion. Grass and its accompanying root system provide limited protection for bare soil, thus the reasoning for seeding skid trails. The grass can actually add somewhat to the structural integrity of the road surface by decreasing erosion, but also serves to breakdown any compacted rock through root development. Regardless of road surface, a proper maintenance regime is essential for ALL woodland roads. And it is also agreed you should not pull your ditches. Ditch erosion is a primary culprit in stream sedimentation. In this case, grass is not a bad thing. What do you think? -*Treeman*

DEAR TREEMAN, I know you're a big fan of the coast redwood. So if you're going to go around telling people this is a good tree to plant, don't you think you should offer a little more information on how to manage it? - *Redcedarman*

DEAR REDCEDARMAN, Are we related? Since we're on a tight space frame, how 'bout if I use the information found on the reforestation card of the Woodland information Series: A Guide to Forest Resource Management.

Marker Potential: All the log buyers I've interviewed say redwood can be milled and fits with the product line of redcedar.

Growth rate: Under the proper conditions, coast redwood is the fastest growing conifer in the world with a potential basal area and volume/acre that dwarfs western redcedar.

Shade Tolerance: Redwood is an extremely shade-tolerant tree.

Big Game Damage: Browsing can vary by species and location, but redwood appears to have less browsing damage than redcedar, but what tree doesn't? A bigger concern other than browsing is racking: deer and elk like the stringy bark and flexible stems on smaller trees.

Frost: Because of its long growing season, redwood is susceptible to frost damage. However, experience has shown only the bud tips freeze and due to the rapid growth of the tree, very little, if any, growth is lost during the season.

Wet soil: The "book" says coast redwood does not thrive in wet soil or clay soils (often found in this area). Personal experience and conversations with others who have planted redwood say the tree thrives in the clay soils and is tolerant or high water tables (look at older redwoods planted as landscape trees that thrive around the area).

Drought: I would be more concerned with drought than wet soil, but coast redwood is a tough tree and can stand moderate drought conditions.

Comments: Tolerant of root rots. Extremely shade tolerant. Avoid higher elevations. Herbicide usage: Site prep of Oust and Accord. Avoid Velpar and Arsenal. Established plantation applications of Accord and/or Oust, Transline and Atrazine. Avoid overspray of Accord during growing season. Make your own memorial grove. -*Treeman*

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