

# WILDLIFE TRENDS

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## Improving Wildlife Habitat and Hunting With Herbicides

by Mark Thomas

**H**erbicides are an extremely important tool for wildlife management. They are usually more effective, less costly, and produce longer lasting results than many cultural practices currently used. This article will focus on improving wildlife habitat and enhancing hunting opportunities at the same time using two basic chemistries – imazapyr and glyphosate.

Imazapyr (ARSENAL, CHOPPER) is an example of a highly selective herbicide. Selectivity means that certain plants are tolerant and will not be harmed (they will, in fact, be released) by over-the-top broadcast applications (see Tolerant Plant List). These plants can be lumped into three main groups – legumes (partridge pea, lespedeza, beggarweeds, etc.), rubus (blackberry, dewberry, etc.), and pines, which are all tolerant of imazapyr. Glyphosate (ROUNDUP PROO, ACCORDO), on the other hand, is an example of a non-selective herbicide, i.e., it will control a very broad spectrum of plants. The plant species that will be released and will recolonize (i.e., those plants that are tolerant) and those that will be controlled is largely a function of the chemistry that is chosen.

Here we will focus on three ways to use herbicides to enhance wildlife habitat and improve the “huntability” of your land. These include enhancing native herbaceous plant communities by controlling low-quality hardwood brush, installing interspersed index enhancement features (spoke & hub), and establishing shooting lanes, stalking trails, and wildlife corridors.

### Low-Quality Hardwood Brush Conversion to High-Quality Herbaceous Plants

Many forest understories in the South are choked with low-quality hardwoods like sweetgum (see Photo). They form a dense canopy and shade the ground, virtually eliminating herbaceous plants. Bushhogging and prescribed burning do not control the root systems of low-quality hardwoods and, in fact, may make the problem worse. Hardwoods produce an average of almost 10 new sprouts per rootstock after mowing, for example. The best method to control low-quality hardwood brush is to spray with a herbicide. Use imazapyr in pine dominated forests and use glyphosate in a mixed or hardwood dominated forest when applying broadcast. Apply



40-year-old loblolly pine sawlog stand that has been burned repeatedly on 3-year intervals. Note complete domination by sweetgum with no herbaceous plants.

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