

Comments on the *Ligustrum* spp. ESA

Submitted by Susan Mason, Friends of Bidwell Park, Chico, California

Our organization, Friends of Bidwell Park, has removed tens of thousands of privet trees (mostly *L. lucidum* and *japonicum*, some *obtusifolium*) from our local park in Chico, California. As volunteers, we are not allowed to use power tools or herbicides so all of our removals have been done using hand tools, such as Weed Wrenches, shovels, and axes.

For the trees that are too big to wrench out, we dig to expose the roots, cut the roots close to the trunk with an axe, continuing to dig and cut until the tree trunk can be moved slightly. Then we throw a rope over a tall branch, pull over the tree and saw it into sections that can be moved or removed. We've removed trees that are 50' in height and 2 1/2 feet in diameter using this technique. In areas near the creek, where periodic high water events have built up layers of silt around the trees, we've cut as many as 3 sets of roots, digging down to a depth of 3-4'.

In the *Ligustrum* spp. ESA, under Management/Mechanical Controls, it is stated that "The entire root must be removed since broken fragments may resprout." In our 3 years of privet removal and monitoring of prior privet sites, we have not found any roots resprouting even though we don't make an effort to remove anything but the tree's crown. Of course, we find lots of seedlings for several years after removing a major seed source, but none of them appear to be regrowing from root fragments.

I mention this because people reading this ESA may hesitate to attempt manual removal of privets because of the perceived need to remove all root fragments may make it too labor-intensive or not effective as a permanent solution. Our experience has been that manual removal can be extremely successful and is work that volunteers enjoy doing.

Of course, removal with a backhoe is even easier and can be done as close as 2' from a tree or plant that is to be saved, if you have an experienced operator. The problem with the cut stump method is that in areas of dense growth of *Ligustrum*, you're not only left with stumps that need monitoring for sucker growth for several years but also take so long to rot that nothing else will grow there for many years.

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