



A weekly question/answer column

**What Is The Correct Way To Get Rid Of
Quaking Aspen Without Having 100 New
Ones Take Their Place?**

Larry Rupp answers:*

Quaking aspen are among the prettiest trees in our canyons, especially during the fall when their yellow leaves and white trunks stand out in contrast to the dark green of nearby conifers. In nature, aspens propagate themselves by suckers growing from the roots. This results in the large clumps of aspen that we enjoy in the mountains, but it creates a problem in the landscape when suckers start appearing in lawn areas and flower beds. Aspens may also have other problems including iron chlorosis, borers, scale, aspen leaf spot and cytospora canker. The result is that in the landscape, aspens tend to be a short-lived, rather messy tree with lots of problems.

If you have aspens you want to remove from your landscape, there is a right and a wrong way.

- The wrong way is to simply cut the tree down. If the tree is cut down, the root system responds by sending up a new group of suckers, and may continue to do so for several years. It is almost like the mythical Hydra; for every head you cut off, several more grow back.
- The right way to remove aspen is to kill the tree and the root system with an herbicide and cut it down after it is dead.
- To kill aspens apply the herbicide Roundup to the base of the trunk. Drill a series of holes into the trunk at a 45 degree angle and fill the holes with concentrated herbicide.
- Another way is to use a sharp hatchet to make a series of shallow, horizontal cuts angled downward through the outer bark and just into the wood. By making one chop with the hatchet and twisting it before removing, a frill is left where the cut bark curls away from the tree. The concentrated herbicide can be poured into these frills and will be absorbed into the tree.
- The best time to apply this treatment is late summer or early fall before the leaves change color. The tree can then be cut down the following spring.

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