

## Wicking For Precision Weed Control

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*Controlling poison ivy and other noxious weeds within a desired planting can be very difficult. Applying herbicides by wicking helps provide precise control.*

### Issue

Poison ivy, poison oak, poison sumac and other noxious weeds can be a nuisance to golfers and the maintenance staff. The American Medical Association estimated that [poison ivy and poison oak](#) cause more cases of contact dermatitis – i.e., blistering, rash and itching – than all other plants and man-made chemicals combined. Once these weeds become established in desirable broadleaf hedges, shrubs or bushes, control can be very difficult and hazardous. Glyphosate and 2,4-D are two herbicides that are effective at [controlling these weeds](#), but these materials can also kill or injure desired plants growing nearby if they are not applied with extreme precision.

Memphis Country Club had an 8-foot-tall, 4,875-foot-long privet hedge that was riddled with poison ivy. The hedge provided desirable screening so it could not be removed. However, maintaining the hedge in its current state continually exposed the maintenance staff and passing golfers to poison ivy.

Spraying herbicides on the hedge would kill the poison ivy, but it would also kill the privet.

### **Action**

Superintendent Jason Bradley decided to try “wicking” to make very precise herbicide applications. Wicking is the practice of using a sponge or rope dipped in a herbicide solution to paint the material onto the weed without touching the desired plant. Glyphosate and 2,4-D are systemic herbicides, so applying them to the leaves of the weed will affect leaves, vines and roots alike.

To control poison ivy in the privet hedge at Memphis Country Club, Bradley had his staff mix a solution of glyphosate and 2,4-D and wick the mixture onto the poison ivy vines with a painter’s sponge brush. The applications were made twice starting in May and the herbicide’s effects on the poison ivy was apparent after just a few hours.

### **Results**

One year after the applications, only 10 percent of the poison ivy remains in the hedge. The dead poison ivy vines are being cut and removed over time. In sections where the majority of the hedge was poison ivy, extra attention is being given to encourage privet regrowth. Wicking applications successfully controlled poison ivy within the privet hedge, reducing the risk of exposure to the maintenance staff and golfers.