

# RUNNING BAMBOO

## What is Running Bamboo?

- Running bamboo is a fast-growing, invasive grass with a complex, horizontal root system called rhizomes that aggressively spread underground, as much as 15 feet per year. Once planted, running bamboo can eventually take over yards and travel across property lines, creating issues for adjacent property owners and local jurisdictions.
- Running bamboo can be destructive to the natural environment and suppress native plant species.
- Roots can push through brickwork, drains, cavity walls, patios, and exploit cracks or weaknesses in concrete.

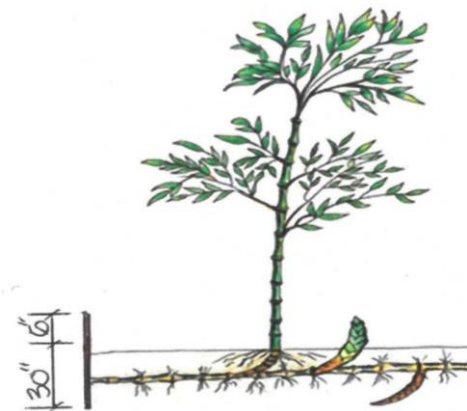


## Property Owner Responsibilities

- In March of 2022, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors passed a new Bamboo Ordinance that goes into effect on January 1, 2023, to be enforced by the Department of Code Compliance on an individual complaint basis. Fairfax County Code § 119-3-2 provides that:
  1. A bamboo owner must not allow running bamboo to spread from the bamboo owner's property to any public right-of-way or any adjoining property not owned by the bamboo owner, and
  2. A bamboo owner must contain the running bamboo to keep it from spreading onto any public right-of-way or adjoining property not owned by the bamboo owner.
- The new ordinance requires property owners to contain running bamboo on their property and prevent it from spreading beyond their property line.
- After the issuance of a Notice of Violation, each day that running bamboo remains uncontained may result in a fine of \$50, up to a maximum of \$2,000 in a 12-month period.
- Property owners may incur additional penalties if they allow bamboo to spread to another adjacent property.

## Containing Running Bamboo with a Root Barrier

- Bamboo root barriers made of polypropylene, metal, or high-density polyethylene (plastic) may be effective to contain running bamboo.
- The root barrier should be 36" in height, with approximately 30" below ground, and 6" above ground.
- The root barrier should be installed in the ground vertically so that any shoots or rhizomes hitting the barrier will be deflected toward the bamboo owner's property and away from adjacent properties, making the rhizomes more visible to identify and cut.



## Containment by Mowing and Herbicide Application

Another option to contain running bamboo is to cut the bamboo as low to the ground as possible and immediately apply a non-selective herbicide. A brush killer containing a high concentration (20-25%) of glyphosate or triclopyr should be applied to the cut tops of the bamboo within one minute of cutting. Subsequent herbicide applications of the leaves with a 5% concentration of glyphosate or triclopyr will be necessary to contain the bamboo growth for approximately 2-5 years. Herbicides should always be used in strict accordance with the label's instructions. Regular mowing (weekly or as needed depending on the season) may help reduce growth. When mowing, use the lowest deck setting on the mower. If using

herbicide, wait to mow until the leaves die.

### **Removing Running Bamboo**

- The quick and early removal of bamboo can reduce the long-term impacts to surrounding trees and vegetation.
- Digging out bamboo requires heavy equipment and coordination with Virginia 811 ([va811.com](http://va811.com))
- Continued removal of new plants and sprouts will be necessary to limit new bamboo growth.
- Various herbicides are available to kill bamboo but should always be used in strict accordance with the label's instructions, which is the law. Treated areas should be monitored regularly to control new seedlings or regrowth



**Before Removal**



**During Removal**



**After Removal**

***Note: Effectively containing running bamboo may require a combination of the above listed options.***

### **Disposal of Running Bamboo**

- All cut bamboo (roots and culms) is collected and processed as trash and not as yard waste at Fairfax County Solid Waste facilities. Residents should include bamboo debris with trash pickup and not with yard waste.
- Cut culms can be dried and used as plant stakes, vine supports, or an array of craft projects.

### **Important Things to Remember**

- It is illegal to allow running bamboo to spread onto other people's property. This applies to property owners and tenants, whether they planted the bamboo or not.
- It is legal to have and maintain bamboo on a property if the bamboo is contained to the bamboo owner's property.
- Beginning January 1, 2023, if you would like to file a complaint about uncontained running bamboo spreading to an adjacent property or right-of-way, please contact the Department of Code Compliance at 703-324-1300, TTY 711, or file an on-line complaint at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/code](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/code).

### **Still Need Help?**

- Visit: [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/running-bamboo](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/running-bamboo)
- Find more information at: <https://extension.umd.edu/resource/containing-and-removing-bamboo>
- Free gardening advice is available through the Fairfax Master Gardeners: <https://fairfaxgardening.org/>, via Email [mgfairfax@vt.edu](mailto:mgfairfax@vt.edu) or call Master Gardener Volunteer Help Desk 703-324-8556.
- For questions about bamboo that do not relate to enforcement, please contact the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District at 703-324-1460.

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To request this information in an alternate format, call  
The Department of Code Compliance at 703-324-1300, TTY 711.

