

# How to Control Bamboo

By the College Park Tree and Landscape Board

## Bamboo in College Park

In March 2011, the City of College Park added an ordinance into the City Code about the maintenance and control of bamboo. It reads: “It shall be unlawful for any property owner, renter, lessee, or occupant to allow bamboo to spread to an adjacent property without the permission of the adjoining owner. (Ord. No. 11-O-02)”

To assist College Park residents with bamboo control, the City’s Tree and Landscape Board offers the following information and recommendations.

## About Bamboo

Bamboo is a perennial member of the grass family and is often one of the most difficult escaped plants to control. It is distinguished from other grasses by its woody stems, branched growth, and often large size. Bamboo can grow anywhere from one to 70 feet tall. Although often considered beautiful, bamboo can quickly turn into a homeowner’s worst nightmare if not properly maintained.

## Two Types

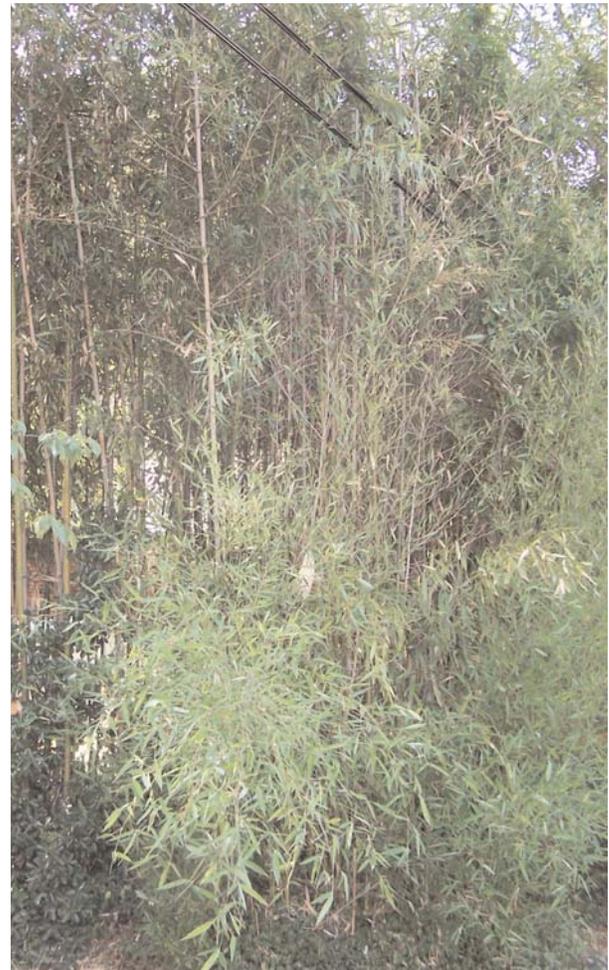
There are two basic types of bamboo; clumping and running. The clump type of bamboo grows in large clumps and is relatively slow in spreading. The root system of a single clump can be rather extensive and quite competitive with surrounding plants. Running types of bamboo, however, are **very invasive** and very competitive with other plants. They can take over large areas, some varieties spreading more than 100 feet from the mother plant in an amazingly short time. The running types of bamboo **should not** be planted.

## Control

Every effort should be taken to control a bamboo infestation in its entirety. Because bamboo is so aggressive, it can re-establish rapidly if any small section is left untouched. Homeowners with bamboo infestations must be vigilant, as the plant requires an intensive control program over several years.

## Removal and Containment

The first step in controlling bamboo should be to remove as much of the root mass and rhizomes of the plant as possible. This can often be done by hand with small infestations, but larger problem areas may require



the use of power equipment. Containment is also a fairly effective method of controlling bamboo, but must be monitored regularly. Because the rhizomes of bamboo are fairly shallow, growing less than one foot deep in the soil, a barrier made of concrete or metal installed a minimum of 3 feet deep has proven effective. Bamboo rhizomes are not stopped by barriers but are merely deflected. Because of this behavior, the areas surrounding the barriers should be monitored regularly for escaped rhizomes, which should then be cut back.

## Mowing

Regular mowing is another method that can help control bamboo over time. Because bamboo is a grass, it can tolerate occasional, but not frequent, mowing. Mowing practices, similar to that in a home lawn can eventually deplete the bamboo rhizomes and offer some control. Two to three years of regular mowing are often needed to see results.

## Herbicides

A final, and often necessary, method of con-

control for bamboo is the use of herbicides. A non-selective herbicide containing the active ingredient glyphosate (e.g., Roundup) is the best option for homeowners.

Glyphosate has very little residual soil activity and will only kill plants that receive direct contact. To maximize the effectiveness of glyphosate, the bamboo must be mowed or chopped and allowed to regrow until the new leaves expand. Glyphosate should then be applied to the leaves. Keep in mind that one application of glyphosate will not eradicate the bamboo infestation. It can potentially take 2–3 years to gain complete control.

Do not apply these products directly to water or to areas where surface water is present. For bamboo control next to creeks, lake basins, wetlands, or other water sources where spray drift will contact the water, choose a glyphosate product labeled for use near water, such as Eraser AQ, Rodeo, Pondmaster, Aquamaster, or Aquapro. Aquatic formulations of glyphosate may be mixed with a non-ionic surfactant, such as Ortho X-77 or Southern Ag Surfactant for Herbicides, to improve control. When using herbicides, please be sure to follow all label instructions.

### Prevention is the best control

Although bamboo control is not impossible, it can often seem that way. Staying on top of the problem is one of the most important things to remember. An intensive control method over several years will be necessary to eradicate a bamboo infestation. One of the best methods of control is prevention. Always do your homework before planting bamboo and encourage your neighbors to do the same.

### Alternatives

Many people choose to plant bamboo to create a natural “screen” or “fence” along the boundary of their property. To achieve such a barrier without encountering the problems associated with the spread of bamboo, consider other plant species such as assorted viburnum, oakleaf hydrangea, pyracantha, bayberry, photinia, rhododendron,



Chuck Barger, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

An infestation of golden bamboo in a public right-of-way.

holly (assorted varieties), and Rose of Sharon. For additional plant choices please refer to the booklet, *Landscape Plants: A Suggested List*, which is available on the Tree & Landscape Board website.

### For more information, visit:

The University of Maryland Extension  
Home and Garden Information Center  
<http://www.hgic.umd.edu>

Clemson University Extension  
[www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/pests/weeds/hgic2320.html](http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/pests/weeds/hgic2320.html)

University of Florida Extension  
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ag266>



The College Park Tree and Landscape Board encourages citizens to adopt practices that promote and protect healthy trees, shrubs and ground cover on private land.

To learn more about the Tree and Landscape Board, view our website at [www.collegeparkmd.gov/tree\\_and\\_landscape\\_board.htm](http://www.collegeparkmd.gov/tree_and_landscape_board.htm).