

Removing and Containing Running Bamboo

Removing Bamboo From Your Yard

If new shoots of bamboo are coming up all over your yard, it is a running bamboo. To get rid of it, there are four steps:

1. Cut it off.
2. Cut it down.
3. Water the area.
4. Cut it down again.

1. **Cut it off.** All of the culms (stalks) of bamboo in a clump or grove are interconnected underground by rhizomes (underground stems) unless you have cut them by digging a ditch or cutting a line with a spade. A bamboo grove is usually one single plant, not a group of plants. Many people have the impression that every bamboo culm (stalk) is a separate “tree.”

If the bamboo in your yard has come across from your neighbor’s yard, separate your grove from his by cutting the connecting rhizomes, which are usually quite shallow (12-18”). If you don’t, and his part is healthy and vigorous, the rhizomes in your part will still be supported by the photosynthesis in the leaves of his part, and your efforts will be in vain.

Therefore, be sure to isolate the portion you want to keep from the portion you want to kill. Cutting rhizomes with a spade or a saw will do the trick if you do it every year. If the growth is old, you may need to use a mattock or a digging bar the first time. Digging a ditch and putting in a barrier is a more permanent solution. (See section on “Containing Bamboo” below)

2. **Cut it down.** Cut the entire grove to the ground. If there is any part you want to keep, see above.

3. **Water the area.** Watering the area will fuel new growth from the rhizomes.

4. **Cut it down again and repeat.** New shoots will come up from the rhizomes. Break them off or cut them off with pruning shears. Keep doing this until no more shoots come up. This will exhaust the energy stored in the rhizomes underground. Without green leaves to photosynthesize and produce new energy, they will no longer be able to send up new shoots. The rhizomes will be left behind, but will eventually rot away.

Source: American Bamboo Society, www.bamboo.com

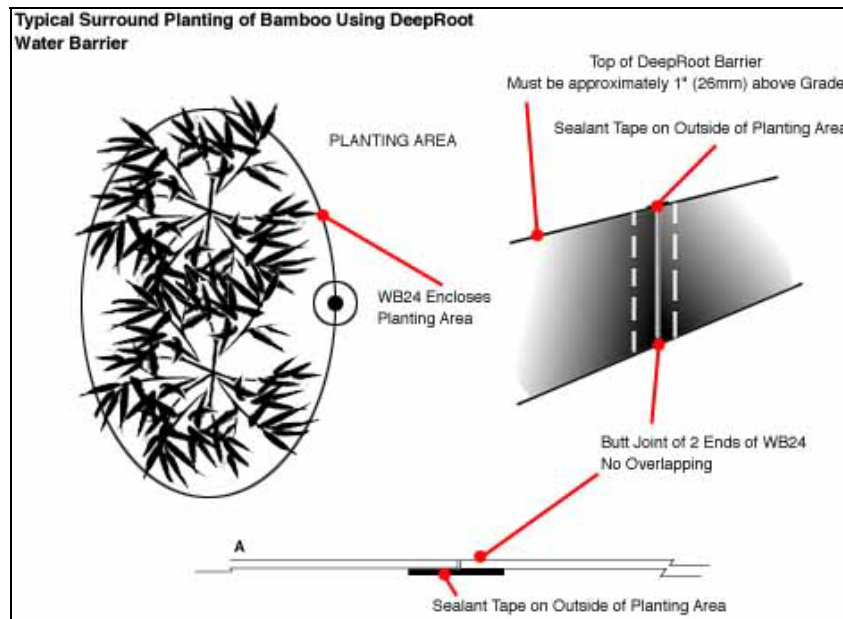
Invasive Plant Fact Sheet

Containing Bamboo

To prevent a running bamboo from spreading, some form of “rhizome barrier” is essential. Barriers can be concrete, or metal, or plastic. Plastic barriers are preferable to cement (which often develops cracks), or metal (which rusts and requires many seams), because it is less expensive, and lasts 20-30 years if installed properly.

The usual recommendation is high-density polypropylene, 40 mil or heavier, glued or taped at junctions, or clamped with stainless-steel clamps. This material comes in rolls, or as hinged sections, and is available from some landscape suppliers and bamboo nurseries. It is frequently called “root barrier.”

A barrier two feet deep is typically effective. It should be slanted outward at the top so that when the rhizomes hit the barrier they will bend upwards. A barrier does not stop a running rhizome; it only deflects it. The barrier should project an inch or two above ground level. Check the barrier once a year, and cut off rhizomes that arch over the top. (NOTE: When bamboo is on steep slopes or in soft, sandy soil, it may be necessary to use a 36-inch deep barrier.)



A water-filled stream or ditch can also effectively block the spread of bamboo, since rhizomes and roots cannot tolerate extended periods of saturation. Water need only be present for one season a year. However, take care not to leave standing water for more than 48 hours to prevent the spread of mosquitoes carrying west Nile virus.

Source: American Bamboo Society, www.bamboo.org/; www.lewisbamboo.com/