

## How to care for Poplar and Willow poles

### Main Points

- Soak poles
- Never plant without soaking
- Plant as soon as possible after soaking
- Look after the trees when planted
- Prune selectively later.

This Environment Topic provides information to allow you to minimize pole deaths and to improve establishment. High establishment rates of poplar and willow poles depend on correct storage, handling and planting techniques and after-planting management.

### Storing Poles

When you receive poles they will have been recently harvested and stored under sprinklers or have been standing in fresh water in the Council's nursery.

When your poles arrive soak them in fresh water until planting time. However, do not leave them soaking for more than 21 days before planting and don't soak poles in stagnant water.

Poles should be stood upright in water that is 200mm to 450mm (8 – 18 inches) deep.

If fresh water is not available poles may be stored for a few days by laying them singly in grass and watering several times a day. Do not store them in a shed as it is critical that poles do not dry out.

### Handling Poles

Plant your poles as soon as possible after soaking. When moving poles take care not to damage the bark by dragging the poles across sharp edges or scraping with a front-end loader as this can cause fungal infection and will also make poles dry out quickly. Poles will not survive for long if left lying on an exposed windy

### Video Available

A video on planting and looking after poles is available from the Regional Council. It can be borrowed free of charge, or purchased for \$11 plus postage.



Pole planting at Pakuratahi Valley

hillside. (See Environment Topic 'Planting Poplar and Willow Poles' for more information on pole planting)

### After-Planting Care

To get the best survival it is important to look after your poles:

- Check them at least once (and preferably regularly), when the soil has started to dry out to make sure they are still firm in the ground. Poles which come loose, will not form roots, or the new roots will break off, especially if cattle or wind add further movement.
- Loose poles can be firmed up by ramming around the base, being careful not to damage the bark.
- Make sure Netlon protectors are stapled on at both ends. Dynex protectors do not need to be stapled.
- Management of cattle is critical to the survival of poles. Cattle should ideally be kept away from planted areas for 12 months. However, if grazing must continue then poles should be monitored daily to avoid damage.
- Check poles for dieback. This can be caused by moisture stress causing growth to come away at a lower part of the pole. There is also likely to be some fungal infection as well, so the dead wood should be removed with a sharp saw.

## Drought Survival

Poles that are in good condition when planted are more likely to survive a drought in their first year. A small number of poles can be watered but a larger planting should be planned (if drought is predicted) and managed as follows:

- Make sure that you match the site with the most appropriate clone.
- Take extra effort to place poles in small hollows on the hillside, south facing slopes or gullies.
- Make sure poles stay firm in the ground.
- Spray around the base with Glyphosate to take away competition for moisture.

## Form Pruning

After 2-3 years of good growth (longer in drier areas), young trees should be pruned to form one leader. Most clones of poplar will form a natural single leader, but some poplars and all willows will form multiple stems. A single leader will give the tree better form and health. It will resist strong winds better and be less likely to split down the middle at an older age.

However, do not form prune too early as young growth is still prone to normal wind or possum damage and it may be very difficult to find a suitable main leader. (See *Environment Topic 'Pruning and thinning Poplar and Willow Poles'* for more information)

### For further information

For further information on poplars ask for the other titles in this series or contact Land Management Officers at the Hawke's Bay Regional Council for advice:

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