

WHAT IS WOODLAND EDGE FEATHERING WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Many species of wildlife, including rabbits and bobwhite quail, benefit from shrubby edges along woodland. This kind of edge habitat serves as a transition zone between a cropland or grassland field and the large mature trees that form the canopy of a woodland. Many of Illinois' woodland and cropland edges are abrupt with large trees spreading out over cropland with little opportunity for a dense shrubby edge to develop. This situation is not good for crop production or good habitat for most species of wildlife. The optimum situation would be a gradual transition from cropland to grasses to shrubs and brambles to small trees blending into the mature woodland. This diversity of habitats in a concentrated area will provide many types of food and cover for many edge, shrubland and woodland species of wildlife.

SPECIFICATIONS

There are three methods to feather the edge of a woodland:

Thinning of Overstory Trees - Edge feathering can be completed by conducting thinning in and along the woodland edge.

- The width of the area to be thinned along the woodland edge should be between 60 and 90 feet wide.
- Divide the width of the thinning area into three zones. Each zone should be 1/3 of the total feathered edge. For instance, a 75-foot feathered edge would have three 25-foot zones.
- The first zone, on the outside edge of the woodland should be thinned the heaviest with 75% to 100% of the overstory trees being cut.
- The second zone will have approximately 50% of the overstory trees cut.
- The last zone should have only 25% of the overstory trees cut.
- Drop trees parallel to the woodland edge and leave "hinged" at the stump, or cut logs for firewood and/or build brush piles for wildlife.
- Stumps may be treated with herbicide or allowed to resprout depending on woody species selection objectives.



Planting Shrubs and Field Borders - Edge feathering can also be completed by planting trees, shrubs, and grasses along the woodland edge.

- The width of the area to be planted along the woodland edge should be at least 30 feet wide.
- Divide the area to be planted into at least 2 zones.
- In the zone closest to the woods plant at least 2 rows of shrubs on 6'x 6' spacing. See JOB SHEET TREE/SHRUB ESTABLISHMENT TREE SEEDLINGS (612TS) for more information and a planting plan.
- The outside zone nearest the cropland should be planted to a mixture of grasses, legumes and forbs beneficial to wildlife. See Job Sheet for FIELD BORDERS (386) and WILDLIFE INSERT FOR FIELD BORDERS JOB SHEET for more information and a planting plan.
- Where the planting area can be wider than the minimum, an addition zone of small fruit, seed, and nut bearing trees should be planted closest to the woods on a 10' x 10' spacing.

Natural Regeneration - Where the woodland edge is presently being maintained by mowing woody sprouts of desirable brambles and shrubs, natural regeneration may be utilized by discontinued mowing instead of planting trees and shrubs in the zone closest to the woodland. Discontinuing cultivation along a woodland edge will also result in natural regeneration of brambles and shrubs if desirable seed sources are close (within 200 feet) to the site.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

- Exclude livestock from edge feathered areas.

- Use herbicides on a spot basis to suppress invasive vegetation and noxious weeds.
- Thin woodland edges again when 50% of the vegetation in the border exceeds 15 feet in height.

Woodland Edge Feathering - Specifications Sheet

NAME: _____
COUNTY: _____
TRACT NUMBER: _____

FIELD NUMBER: _____
DATE: _____
ASSISTED BY: _____

Specific Recommendations

Purpose of edge feathering:

Wildlife species to be benefited:

Method of edge feathering: _____

Additional Operation and Maintenance: _____

Site Location Map



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