

Lopping: Trail Maintenance

Why:

- a) reduce chance of hikers getting ticks or chiggers.
- b) Minimize the amount of dew or rain on plants that will get hikers wet.
- c) Improved appearance, less need for blazing.
- d) reduce chance of small branch poking a person's eye
- e) reduce chance of hiker getting cut by briars
- f) Note problem areas (Need rock work, trees down, need for bridges, culverts, signs etc. for work days). Include coordinates if possible.
- g) Remove trip hazards (loose rocks, pine cones), fill holes
- h) improve the view

How Much:

- Think of walking down a trail with a 4x8 sheet of plywood in front of you. Some say 6.5' wide
- Tread should be 18" to 2 ft wide

What to cut:

- brush, briars, small trees, vines. Leave grasses for weed whackers or mowers (work days)
- vines can be very thick and take forever with shears. Get coordinates and report for work days so they can be cut with hedge trimmer.
- Cut branches as close to trunk as possible. If cut out further, will grow back with 2 or more branches
- A brush puller can be used to completely remove a problem brush or tree, but very heavy to lug around.
- cut brush and small trees as close to the ground as possible on established trails. (Leave 3' high when making new trail so can pull out roots)
- For downed trees, lop off small branches so easier to walk around and to save time for saw crew.

How to cut:

- Strongly recommend Fiskar **geared loppers** with 3:1 mechanical advantage as can easily cut 2" branch.
- Use **hand saw** for larger branches. Corona brand cuts in both directions. Cut from underside part way first to avoid tearing the bark.

Raking:

- Remove trip hazards (loose rocks, pine cones)
- Remove leaves that can be very slick when wet.
- Improves visibility of the tread so reduces need for blazes (a.k.a. Reassurance markers)

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Resources: https://www.americantrails.org/files/pdf/Volunteers_Guide_to_Trail_Maintenance.pdf