

ROADSIDE SCRUB CONTROL

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At present, the control of scrub species and noxious weeds is carried out by governmental and semi-governmental bodies as remedial action. These control measures involve the use of chemicals in large quantities, often by semi-skilled operators, which constitutes a hazard to neighbouring crops, pastures, the operators, and the general public. The result is frequently a volume of unsightly dead herbage, which causes an increased fire danger, the area being recolonized by a fresh species, resulting in the further use of chemicals.

It is suggested that a thoroughfare should not only provide easy communication, but that it should also be a fire break and have an aesthetic appearance. To achieve this, it would be better to grass the roadsides and have them mown.

Possibly owing to pressure of finance and public desire to have sealed roads, it is the common practice to form the verge and leave nature to colonize it with natural herbage. The result - generally tall-growing grasses, noxious weeds, and scrub - is both unsightly and a fire hazard.

It is considered that the road engineers should leave the verge in such a condition that the drainage is complete and the surfaces smooth with a layer of topsoil. The verge should then be sown to a suitable species of grass and fertilized in order that it will grow readily. The desired result should be a dense herbage which is accessible to a mower or slasher and which will preclude the voluntary growth of undesirable species.

The selection of grass would vary with the area and the climate, but it is well known that agronomists, in their search for better species for agricultural production, discard thousands because they lack rate of growth and volume. Somewhere among these discarded grasses should be found species that, while providing a dense bottom, never grow to any height. A rhizomatous species would probably supply the density and be able to live through dry periods.

It may mean that separate research would need to be conducted to find a suitable herbage, but if this concept is adopted, it would eliminate the hazards involved in the use of chemicals and reduce the cost of roadside maintenance to a minimum.