

# Compare Weed Badger<sup>®</sup> with other weed control methods

Get answers to the frequently asked questions below.

[Can Weed Badger help me use less hand labor?](#)

[How does Weed Badger in-row mechanical tillage compare in cost with other weed control methods?](#)

[Why should I avoid using landscape fabric in my orchard or vineyard?](#)

[How does Weed Badger precision in-row tillage compare to using fabric in windbreaks and shelterbelts?](#)

[How does Weed Badger help you combat herbicide resistance?](#)

## Can Weed Badger® help me use less hand labor?

Weed Badger® reduces hand labor. One machine can easily do more work than an entire crew of laborers with hand hoes. Think about it. Which is easier? What will be more economical? Would you rather hire one person to operate a Weed Badger® or try to keep two hundred field workers busy hoeing by hand? Let's face it, the days of hiring school age students for economical labor are over. Finding willing migrant labor workers is more difficult as borders are closed tighter. Manual labor is hard to find and expensive if you can find it.

Maybe you and your family are doing the hand work now. Wouldn't you rather spend your time improving your farm in other ways or spending quality time with your family? Why put up with

back-breaking hand labor when there is a better way?

Weed Badger® tillage does what hand labor cannot. Weed Badger® tillage kills the weeds and sweeps the trash out of the row. Hand labor crews often just chop off the big weeds at the soil surface, leave most of the smaller weeds, and call the job done. No surprise that there is renewed flush of growth within weeks. Hand labor has little effect on soilborne insect populations or disease. Weed Badger® kills all the weeds, sweeps trash out of the row, and stirs the soil surface...thoroughly exposing larvae, eggs, and disease-harboring trash to sunlight and air. Hand-held hoes simply cannot aerate and stir the soil surface like a Weed Badger®.

[Back to top](#)

**Compare Weed Badger® with other weed control methods • Page 2 of 8**

email [inquiry@weedbadger.com](mailto:inquiry@weedbadger.com) • website [www.weedbadger.com](http://www.weedbadger.com) • Toll Free (800) 437-3392  
Weed Badger Division • 5673 95<sup>TH</sup> Avenue SE • Marion ND 58466 • Phone (701) 778-7511 • Fax (701) 778-7501  
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## How does Weed Badger® in-row mechanical tillage compare in cost with other weed control methods?

Consider what you can save on hand labor and/or herbicides by using a Weed Badger®. We have reports from growers spending tens of thousands of dollars for one season's weed control on moderate acreages whether for hand labor or herbicide application. Seasonal weather patterns vary, such as rainfall and average temperature, and thus weed control costs also vary. Repeated herbicide use actually increases future weed control expense. Weed shift is virtually unavoidable when chemicals are used to control weeds. Species of weeds and grasses become resistant to chemicals. Reliance on herbicide in effect means you pay out-of-pocket or out-of-budget each year and actually create a selective breeding program producing super-weeds on your ranch or farm. Sooner or later you must hire hand labor. That subtracts further from your bottom line.

You know how much you spend annually for hand labor...if you can get it. You know how

expensive herbicide is, the special equipment and training required, plus the hassle of record keeping and liability concerns. Realistic comparison of Weed Badger® to other weed control methods requires consideration of multiple seasons' expense. Purchasing a Weed Badger® is a one-time expense. Many Weed Badger® owners use the same machine year after year for 20 or more years.

For comparison sake, under average conditions, one person using a Weed Badger® can easily travel 1 to 2½ MPH through the fields, doing the same work as hand laborers...but more thoroughly and more reliably. It is far easier and safer for your employees than hand labor or chemical application. A Weed Badger® does not get tired so it gets all the weeds, all the time, not just the big ones. Compare the numbers. Even on a modest size operation, in just a few seasons, you more than pay for a Weed Badger®.

[Back to top](#)

## Why should I avoid using landscape fabric in my orchard or vineyard?

Fabric has a purpose but there are factors that cannot be ignored. **Weed barrier fabric is designed for an entirely different business and a different use.** It is intended for commercial landscapers and homeowners to put around landscape plants and under decorative mulch where they don't want any weeds to grow. The rationale for making a leap from growing shrubs around a home or office building to the vineyard or orchard is a stretch at best. Landscape fabric may be useful in the situations for which it was designed. Landscape fabric is to be used in situations where the plants are removed and replanted every 10-15 years or so. Fabric is permanently installed for erosion control along stream banks and steep slopes. It was also to be used only under some type of mulch, however, and never alone. It is replaced periodically along with the plants.

**Fabric has already worn out its welcome elsewhere.** In the Upper Midwest fabric used in shelterbelts is installed with claims that it decomposes in seven years. However, it is still intact and not yet showing signs of decomposition after more than 20 years. Sunlight is required for decomposition. Tree canopies shade the fabric. Soil, grass, and leaves cover the fabric preventing decomposition. After 20 years it is now frayed and snagged, with weeds and grass growing on top of it and alongside the edges and around the base of the trees. Even mowing is difficult, sometimes impossible, as it catches the strings and edges of fraying fabric. There is no way to clean up a mess like that.

**Fabric girdles mature trees.** As trees mature they outgrow holes cut in the fabric. Eventually the still intact fabric cuts into the bark. Owners are instructed by Soil Conservation Districts to go out, climb underneath thousands of trees stretching for miles to cut the holes bigger. The

same scenario will likely occur in orchards and vineyards.

Most alarming of all, **growers report they have been unable to remove or replace the fabric without removing the trees.** Many local farmers and homeowners have attempted to remove fabric. Tree roots, grass, and weeds are impossibly entwined into the fabric. Even with a box cutter knife, on your hands and knees, only small sections can be pulled up at a time. We know of no one who has been able to successfully remove fabric in large plantings of shelterbelt trees, let alone do it without damaging the trees. Eventually miles of girdled trees will die and need replacement.

**How will you add soil amendments?** With the fabric permanently in place it becomes impossible to add soil amendments, organic matter, or treat soil problems at any time. Your vineyard or orchard will endure for decades and generations. At some point it will become a necessity to amend the soil. Without soil amendments yields and quality will suffer. Soil is a composition of living breathing organisms, along with minerals, and organic matter. Adding expensive nutrients through irrigation water or foliar applications only provides a quick shot of nutrition and does absolutely nothing to fix the soil, which is the source of a nutrient deficiency. Nitrogen and phosphorus applied in irrigation water can move quickly beyond the root zone, into groundwater or run off into surface watersheds. Potassium requires decades to percolate down through soil layers. It's best incorporated in the root zone to be accessible to your plants. Fabric is a physical barrier completely prohibiting the practice of broadcasting and incorporating soil amendments. Organic matter must be renewed periodically or soil will lose fertility, critical structure, beneficial

Compare Weed Badger® with other weed control methods • Page 4 of 8

microflora, vital aeration, and the capacity to capture and hold water.

**Fabric restricts earthworm activity.**

Earthworms cannot survive without food, such as compost. Optimum soil aeration resulting from earthworm tunnels is impossible. Soil under fabric cannot “breathe”. Beneficial microorganisms suffer or cease to function without air.

What kinds of pests are going to move in under the fabric? **Fabric is a welcome mat** for rodents, insects, and diseases. In time grass and weeds root right on top of the fabric in the soil that blows in and the leaves that fall and decompose. It is only a matter of time until fabric ages and provides a perfect habitat for rodents and insects that overwinter in the soil. Unfortunately there may be no way to remove that habitat without removing or damaging the established vineyard or orchard. There is no way to even gain access to the soil

where soilborne larva and eggs are overwintering or disease is propagating.

**Does appearance matter to you?** Fabric may present a consistent appearance during the first years...straight strips of synthetic plastic material. But what will it look like in time? Will you even be able to remedy the unsightly situation when it occurs? Nothing looks better or more natural than clean, cultivated, healthy soil.

**What is promoted as “easy” is not always easy for the long term.** Easy for whom? Who is going to have to go out and try to correct the problems with hand labor when they develop? Who will pay as crop yields and quality suffer? Precision in-row cultivation with Weed Badger® cultivates not only a crop...you cultivate and build the soil on which the crops will depend for decades to come.

[Back to top](#)

## How does Weed Badger® precision in-row tillage compare to using fabric in windbreaks and shelterbelts?

**Weed Badger in-the-row tillage is economical.** Weed barrier fabric comes with a high cost...from \$.75 to \$.80 per foot and much more if mulch is applied on top of the fabric. 1 mile of weed barrier fabric for one row of trees can cost \$4000.00 for the fabric alone, before installation! Even if this is cost-shared by a government program, it is still your money spent as a taxpayer. You could purchase one top-of-the-line Weed Badger® for every two miles of fabric and have money left over. Get years of “badgering” for a fraction of the cost of fabric. Once the trees mature sell the Weed Badger. Demand is high for used Weed Badgers and resale prices are good.



**Stunted stressed tree in barrier fabric**

**Weed Badger provides optimum soil aeration for optimum healthy tree growth without chemicals.** When you aerate the soil, you accelerate nutrient delivery. Soil is full of life. You could say that soil breathes. Microbial life is vital to healthy soil and tree growth. Aeration by tilling the soil gives it the ability to convert decaying materials into life sustaining nutrients. Weed Badger® actually turns weeds into fertilizer. Proper aeration gives the fertilizers you use the opportunity to do the most good. Aerating the soil also allows improved water penetration or percolation. Trees do not thrive with “wet feet” in poorly aerated soils.

Weed Badger's horizontal, rotary action is the easiest way to aerate the in-row strip. Trees need to “harden-off” in preparation for harsh winters and strong winds. Good soil and sunlight penetration encourage strong healthy wood growth. Weed Badger® gives you positive depth control. Roots and soil structure aren't harmed by Weed Badger's unique shallow tillage.

**Fabric becomes a disaster as the years go by because it doesn't break down.** Weeds get well established right next to the tree, competing for sunlight, nutrients, and moisture. Super weeds thrive on the edges. Tillage or mowing next to fabric is impossible without hooking fabric. Over time, soil blows and washes over fabric. Weeds thrive right on top of the fabric. Sunlight, necessary to break down the fabric, can no longer penetrate the weeds and wind-blown soil.



**An impossible mess years later**

In time it becomes an unsightly eyesore with weedy trash and frayed fabric...impossible to remove now that roots and weeds entangle the fabric. Worst of all, as trees mature they outgrow holes. Now you must cut each hole bigger or trees will die. Fabric is not the easy or cheap solution promised!

**Compare Weed Badger® with other weed control methods • Page 6 of 8**





**Perfect habitat for rodents and insects. What do you do with it now?**

**Fabric and weeds invite rodents and insects.** Weed growth that is home to disease, fungus, and insect egg and larva is also a great place for rodent pests to live. Rodents love to tunnel under fabric. If debris is left in the row during winter, you will experience bark and root damage from pests and lose even the healthier older trees. Clean up and sanitize the strip, and natural predators will take care of rodents that escape the “teeth of your Badger.”

**99% perfect weed control without chemicals or hand labor.**

**Tilled soil absorbs the heat of the day rather than reflecting it back onto lower limbs and needles.** Lay a thermometer on top of black weed barrier fabric on a hot summer day. Is it any wonder fabric installers suggest that leaving those “few” weeds grow around the tree is a *good thing!* Reflected summer heat scorches trees. Sun scalding of evergreens in spring is caused when elevated air temperatures initiate too early growth. Fabric raises air temps even higher.

**Weed competition is virtually eliminated with Weed Badger® tillage.**



**Tilled tree rows look great now and for years to come.**

Clean, sanitized tree rows always look good along fields, recreation areas, roadsides, or by your business or farm. After trees mature, plant a cover crop underneath. Since weeds have not gone to seed over the years, mature trees will continue to look good and weed free as grass establishes quickly.



**Weed Badger® is the fast, easy, and economical solution to weed control in windbreaks and shelterbelts.**

[Back to top](#)

## How does Weed Badger® help you combat herbicide resistance?

The term “herbicide resistance” or “weed shift” refers to the appearance of tough, resistant, large weeds after years of chemical weed control. Horseweed, for example, was once merely a nuisance weed. It is hard to pull out, quick to sprout back after cutting, and capable of towering over tractors. But now it has been described as a full-blown nightmare. California farmers are finding strains of it resistant to scores of herbicides. It has become an increasingly formidable and costly foe.

**Relying on one solution, herbicide, to solve all problems, has created the problem.** Herbicide resistance is an inheritable quality. An individual plant that survives a particular herbicide treatment is capable of producing a population that passes on that trait. Herbicide resistance is not unique to glyphosate-based herbicide. The problem was increasingly noticed by farmers using other classes of herbicide as early as the 1960’s and not acknowledged or studied by the agrochemical industry until the 1980’s. By the early 1990’s there were already over 100 species of weeds and

grasses exhibiting resistant strains, in over 40 countries worldwide, and involving 15 different modes of action. Some resistant weed strains have already developed resistance to multiple herbicides and modes of action. **The problem is not going to go away with different formulations or switching to different classes of herbicide.**

Most new Weed Badger® customers that have used herbicides in the past come to us seeking a solution to at least one herbicide resistant strain of weed at their farm or business. The solution is using different cultural practices. Even the international agrochemical industry is recommending mechanical cultivation as an alternative means of controlling resistant weeds. **Weed Badger® kills big weeds, small weeds, and even herbicide-resistant weeds...all the time.** Weed Badger® offers a wide range of options, tools, and attachments to provide a wide range of mechanical weed control approaches.

[Back to top](#)