

**PURPOSE:** Scalping is used to remove the top layer of sod that may hinder proper tree planting seedling survival and plantation establishment due to competition and white grub type beetle attacks. This is especially useful to increase longleaf pine survival.

**BACKGROUND:** In some pastures and old fields, the competition from grasses can be severe. These same grasses act as breeding grounds for white grub type beetles that feed on the roots of pine seedlings. When a broadcast herbaceous weed control is performed the beetles feed on the only live root tissue present, usually the pine seedlings. In addition, some sods store seeds that sprout in following years and compete with seedling growth.



**EQUIPMENT:** Scalping should be performed using a 12-inch couler, middle-buster, and wing disk on a three-point hitch, behind a large farm tractor or similar mechanized equipment. Scalping can be done up to the time immediately before planting either with a separate operation or just ahead of the tree planting machine.

**METHOD OF APPLICATION:** Due to the conditions found on this site, scalping will be performed prior to tree planting. Scalping rows should be spaced evenly along the contour of the site. This interval will coincide with the width between tree planting rows as designated in the “Specification for Tree Planting”. The scalping rows will serve as the planting rows. The scalping width should average 24 inches and a maximum of 30 inches. Depth of scalping should be no deeper than is necessary to remove or “peel back” the root zone of the vegetation on the site. The actual depth should rarely be more than 3-4 inches. Tractor speed can be adjusted accordingly for the desired results.

**PRECAUTIONS:** When scalping and subsoiling are both recommended, they should be planned 30 to 60 days in advance of expected tree planting to ensure adequate rainfall will permit proper settlement of soil. Scalping and subsoil rows must occur at intervals equal to the distance between tree planting rows as designated by a registered forester. All forestry practices are to be performed in such a manner as to maintain soil productivity, limit soil erosion, and protect water quality. Therefore, scalping and subsoil rows must follow the contour of the site.

Photo Credit: North Carolina State University Archives, North Carolina State University, [www.forestryimages.org](http://www.forestryimages.org)



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