

Tree Roots & Tile Drains

Fact Sheet # 13

Underground drainage systems can generally be considered as permanent structures. With proper grade control during installation and appropriate monitoring and maintenance over the ensuing years, underground drainage represents a prudent, long term investment.

One issue can arise however and this relates to the ingress of tree roots. As a general precaution, when tile drains cross a plantation, non-perforated pipe is used. Likewise when running parallel to a plantation it is common practice to have an off-set of 10-15 metres to avoid the likelihood of root invasion. Despite these precautions there are some trees that have particularly aggressive root systems, and there is no choice but to plan for their removal from the site to be drained. There are a whole host of garden plants that can be detrimental to a drainage system but the species most likely to be encountered in farm paddocks include willow, poplar, blackwoods and red gum.

Willows and poplars have an annoying habit of vigorously re-shooting once cut so it is imperative that they are poisoned in situ. This generally involves cutting to a stump and the instant application of a glyphosate type herbicide to the exposed surface by paint brush. Tree roots have been known to invade a drainage system within months of installation so it is better to have invasive species controlled before drain laying commences. This is particularly important when the tile drain intercepts a spring or soak and gives year-round flow. Tree roots love this form of sub-surface irrigation!

Root removal is a time consuming, tedious operation and is only possible in the drier months. Root clearing can be done by excavation, mechanical root cutting or high pressure water jetting. Drain maintenance is always an imperative and outlets should be checked regularly for vegetation and sediment build-up. Junction pits offer an easy method of monitoring drain flow and reduced drain flows should be noted for future inspection over the summer months



more grass less mud ... guaranteed

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