

Use of battery-powered pruning tools

When the Track maintenance program was established, the available tools were limited to manual tools such as secateurs, hedge clippers and pruning saws. Powered tools – which were then **petrol-powered** (chainsaws and brush cutters) – were not authorised for volunteer use due to safety, training and insurance considerations.

However, access to fairly compact and lightweight **battery-powered** pruning tools now brings a new level of efficiency to Track maintenance. The likely reduction in fatigue and manual handling strain/injury is an added bonus.

Volunteers are now authorised to use battery-powered tools such as hedge trimmers and reciprocating saws.

You will be asked to agree to a short list of safety and operational considerations. As long as you do this, you will continue to be covered by the volunteer insurance in the event of any accident or injury.

The process of authorisation is as follows:

1. Read the documents *Safe use of power tools on the Track* and *JSA Using battery-powered tools*, both available on the Maintenance Matters archive.
2. Print and sign the JSA. Return by scan and email, or post.

(A job safety analysis (JSA) is “a written procedure developed to review work steps and their associated hazards in order to put in place correct solutions to eliminate or minimise the risk of those hazards”¹. Actions listed in the JSA complement the tool manufacturer's safety recommendations).

At this time, use of brush cutters (line trimmers) and chainsaws – even battery-powered units – are still restricted for sectional volunteers. You would need to have all necessary PPE and current certification (for chainsaws). Please contact us to discuss, if you would like to use either of these tools (email maintenance@bibbulmuntrack.org.au).

Recommended tools

The tool required will depend on the vegetation type you are working in. A few volunteers have already tried out some tools on the market, and we can make some suggestions if you don't already own a suitable tool. We can recommend:



Hedge trimmer...

Like the Ryobi 18V, 55cm hedge trimmer (see www.ryobi.com.au/outdoor/products/details/18v-one-2-5ah-55cm-hedge-trimmer-kit). A great tool to help you keep on top of the dense south-coast regrowth.



Pruning shears...

... like the Stihl HDA 25 Trimmer (see www.stihl.com.au/STIHL-Products/Hedge-Trimmers/Battery-Hedge-Trimmers/242388-1591/HSA-25-Garden-Shears.aspx).

Perth Hills volunteer Rick says “I used the trimmer for the first time, and it was truly amazing. I did in 1.5 hours what used to take me all day, and the look of it afterwards is wonderful. It is such a brilliant little machine, light, manoeuvrable, strong, and rugged, with life still in the battery after 1.5 hours. When I think of the vollies down south along the coast I just hope they take my tip and get a trimmer immediately.”



Reciprocating saw...

... like the Makita DJR183Z mobile compact reciprocating saw, (see www.makita.com.au/building-construction/category/cutting/recipro-saw/djr183z-18v-mobile-compact-recipro-saw).

This is a compact and efficient tool. It fits in the daypack with blade removed. A long session removing karri hazel and other small trees fallen near Pemberton after the winter storms was accomplished without a battery change.

If you have experience with any other tools you think would be suitable, we'd love to hear about them!

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

In addition to normal work-wear (full cover clothes, boots and hat), you should use:

- Gloves – protect hands from cuts and scratches
- Safety glasses – protect eyes from chips and saw dust
- Hearing protection – protect hearing from close and loud noise

Refer back to **Safe use of power tools on the Track** and the JSA (**JSA Using battery-powered tools**) for guidance on working safely.



Source of tools

At the current time, volunteers will generally be required to purchase their own tools.

Subsidy of tools when purchased from selected local outlets, or the loan of pruning tools owned by the BTF, is a future possibility. We are working on securing support from dealerships and will let you know when this program is up and running. We welcome suggestions.

We have a small number of orbital sanders and drills – stored at the Kensington office of P&WS – which may be borrowed for short term use by campsite maintenance volunteers. Email maintenance@bibbulmuntrack.org.au to discuss access to one of these tools.

¹ <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/job-safety-analysis-isa>