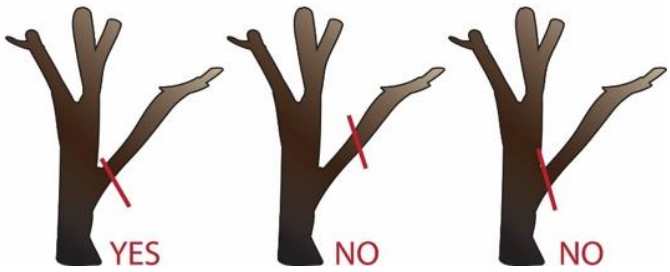
Clearing and pruning

Clearing and pruning the corridor is a key maintenance goal. See the factsheet ***The Trail Corridor*** for context and big-picture strategy. Let's now look at the details…

Removing obstructing vegetation

- Repeated 'tip-pruning' is not an efficient use of your time and effort! Better to make one major cut through a primary branch if you can.
- To remove a branch, prune it close to the trunk/main stem. Don't cut it flush with the trunk – this can rip the bark, which is unsightly and increases the risk of fungal infection to the plant. Instead, make the cut to leave a 'collar' (right). Pruning to the collar enables the plant to heal quickly.



Pruning to the collar

- For larger diameter branches, do it in two steps. First cut up from the underside. Remove the saw before it 'grabs' and make the finishing cut down from the top, supporting the branch if possible. This method prevents stripping of the bark and can give more control when taking off heavy branches.
- Make each cut perpendicular to (directly across) the branch. This will leave the least cut surface exposed, and the plant will heal faster.
- For particularly heavy branches, consider first removing most of the weight by cutting it further away from the trunk using the two-step method described above. Removing the final stump to the collar is then easier and neater.
- Branch stumps can become a hazard and cause injury if they protrude into the trail corridor. They should be removed back to the nearest branch/trunk.

Disposal of debris

- Fallen and cut debris should not be left in the trail corridor, other than in coastal areas (discussed below). It can be unsightly and may create a tripping hazard.
- As much as possible, carry cut debris several metres off the Track. Distribute it evenly among other plants to avoid mounds (which can promote fire) and give the Track a more natural look.
- The cut ends of stems/branches should face away from the Track. The visible leaf end – as it dies off – will blend more unobtrusively with surrounding vegetation in the line-of-sight of walkers.
- Pulled weeds should be bagged and taken off the Track for disposal.

Safety

Suitable protective clothing and footwear should always be worn for Track maintenance. Standard PPE for pruning should include:

- Eye protection
- Gloves
- High visibility clothing… such as our awesome orange BTF volunteer vest!

Tools

- Choose the right tool for the job. The correct tool lets you make the cuts needed and reduces the level of effort. Twisting and straining to make a cut is an indication that the tool is too small for the job. You should swap to the next most appropriate tool.
- You may need a variety of tools to handle the varying diameter of branches you will find on your section. This will depend on typical plant species. As you get familiar with your section, you should identify the tools most worthwhile to carry. You won't want to take more than you need! Check out a variety of tools to consider, from smallest to largest capacity, below…
- Tools should be well maintained and sharp. Using sharp tools, you'll get a clean cut without rough edges. The plant will heal faster.
- Sharp tools are also safer, as you are likely to use them more effectively.
- Using a power tool can save effort, strain on the body, and time.
- See the factsheet ***Using battery-powered pruning tools*** for general information about use of cordless electric tools on the Track.
    - Please be aware that small battery-powered chainsaws may only be used with authorization and appropriate training.

Secateurs – for trimming the smallest diameter twigs/stems. Cutting to the collar is more effective if the thin blade is placed on the trunk side of the cut.

Pruning shears – designed to cut small branches (up to 1cm diameter)

Loppers – can handle green wood up to several centimetres diameter (depending on the model). Variations include bypass or anvil style blades; rachet mechanism for more power.

Pruning saw – can be used to cut significant fallen branches/small trunks. Available in rigid and folding models, with straight or curved blades. The blade in this picture is 18cm.
For smaller branches, a curved blade is best. The saw cuts on the pull stroke.
Larger branches may be cut using a rigid, straight-blade tree saw; but it is less convenient than a reciprocating saw.
A conventional workshop saw is not likely to be appropriate – they require much more effort, the teeth clog quickly, and they do a poor job.

(Battery-powered) Reciprocating saw – more convenient and ergonomic for larger fallen branches/small trunks. The wood blade in this picture is 20cm.

(Battery-powered) Hedge trimmer – useful for efficient trimming of multiple stems (up to 1cm diameter) of bushes/shrubs. Useful for dense regrowth but is essentially tip-pruning… therefore you may need to target the larger, inner branches (using loppers or a saw) if the corridor is narrowing.

Removing hazards from the tread

- Obstacles on the tread will be more frequent where use is less.
- Native plants or weeds will continually grow, die and regenerate.
- Maintenance by removal of seedlings, stumps, roots and major weeds will assist even use of the tread and reduce track creep (widening or deviation).
- A lot of native plants can regenerate from the roots, so small plants should be removed by pulling or digging out completely or at least cut off below ground level. But treat them differently in coastal sand – see below…
- Do not leave any short stumps – they could be a tripping hazard.
- If total stump removal (including root ball) is necessary, first prune to between knee and waist height. This gives you a handle on the root ball which can be used for leverage as the root ball is excavated.
- For more information about weed control, refer to the factsheet ***Weeds***, and your ***Common weeds…*** booklet.
- Emergent rocks do not need to be removed unless they present an obvious tripping hazard.
- Following removal of whole plants or rocks, fill in the hole and compact the ground to the best of your ability, to prevent a larger hole forming.

- Any obstacle too large to remove with your available tools should be reported, for attention by either one of our SVs, or the PaWS district crew. See the factsheets ***Essentials of Reporting*** and ***Accuracy of location data*** for important tips about reporting.
- Where 4WD vehicles or trail bikes are known to access the Track, low, small diameter fallen branches or trunks which are easily stepped over or walked around may be left, to discourage their access. It is fatiguing for walkers to step over many in a day, so you should use your discretion when deciding whether to leave them.

Managing the tread in coastal areas…

- Where the soil is very sandy and the terrain is not flat, the tread must be held together.
- Do not completely remove native plants – lightly trim them, leaving them to sucker and hold the sandy surface together.
- Very light cut material can be left on the tread surface. Heavier material should be used as ground cover in adjacent bare areas.
- Refer to the factsheet ***Overgrowth management on the south coast*** for a useful method to manage lesser regrowth as well as significant overgrowth.