

Controlling Forests Doesn't Have To Be Toxic

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Running electricity through a forest can be a dangerous business. To ensure that high-voltage power lines aren't touched by branches or brought down by falling trees, they need to have a clear zone free of tall trees. Usually, tree-growth in these "right-of-ways" is managed with thousands of litres of chemical herbicide. However, a University of Victoria biology prof has come up with a novel way of dealing with this problem by developing a forestry-related biological herbicide. While seemingly simple, this idea brings together all the best aspects of forest management.

Using a naturally-occurring [fungus](#), UVic biologist Dr. Will Hintz has developed an inexpensive and environmentally safe alternative to traditional forms of chemical weed control. With support from UVic's technology transfer office—the Innovation and Development Corporation (IDC)—Hintz founded Mycologic, a UVic spin-off company that tested and developed the fungus for commercial use. Now, 15 years and \$1.4 million later, Mycologic has released Chontrol, a unique biological herbicide for the management of woody forest vegetation in North America.

"We felt the need to create an alternative to chemical herbicides and go one step further - to develop a natural product with a wider field application and reduced [environmental impact](#)," says Hintz.

For the same price as its chemical alternatives, Chontrol can keep right-of-ways clear without the risk of affecting wildlife or contaminating

nearby streams and rivers. The technology, which will be used for the first time commercially this spring, is the only biopesticide product currently on the market for forest vegetation management. It is also opening up new possibilities for controlling vegetation in sensitive areas where chemical [herbicide](#) use is restricted.

Provided by University of Victoria

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