

Description

A brush barrier is a perimeter sediment control constructed with stacked shrubs, tree limbs, and bushy vegetation that has been cleared from a construction area. Brush barriers reduce sediment loads by intercepting and slowing sheet flow from disturbed areas.

Appropriate Uses

A brush barrier is an appropriate BMP at sites where there is adequate brush from the clearing and grubbing of the construction site to construct an effective brush barrier. Brush barriers are typically used at the toe of slopes and should be implemented in combination with other BMPs such as surface roughening and reseeding.

Brush barriers should be considered short-term, supplemental BMPs because they are constructed of materials that naturally decompose. Brush barriers are not acceptable as a sole means of perimeter control, but they may be used internally within a site to reduce slope length or at the site perimeter in combination with other perimeter control BMPs for multi-layered protection.

Brush barriers are not appropriate for high-velocity flow areas. A large amount of material is needed to construct a useful brush barrier; therefore, alternative perimeter controls such as a fabric silt fence may be more appropriate for sites with little material from clearing.

Design and Installation

The drainage area for brush barriers should be no greater than 0.25 acre per 100 feet of barrier length. Additionally, the drainage slope leading down to a brush barrier must be no greater than 3:1 and no longer than 150 feet.

To construct an effective brush barrier, use only small shrubs and limbs with diameters of 6 inches or less. Larger materials (such as a tree stump) can create void spaces in the barrier, making it ineffective. The brush barrier mound should be at least 3 feet high and 5 feet wide at its base.

In order to avoid significant movement of the brush and improve effectiveness, a filter fabric can be placed over the top of the brush pile, keyed in on the upstream side, and anchored on the downstream side. On the upgradient side, the filter fabric cover should be buried in a trench 4 inches deep and 6 inches wide.



Photograph BB-1. Brush barrier constructed with chipped wood. Photo courtesy of EPA.

Brush Barrier	
Functions	
Erosion Control	Moderate
Sediment Control	Moderate
Site/Material	No

Maintenance and Removal

Inspect the brush barrier for voids where concentrated flow or erosion is occurring. Voids in the brush barrier should be filled with additional brush. Accumulated sediment should be removed from the uphill side of the barrier when sediment height reaches one-third of the height of the barrier.

If filter fabric is used, inspect the filter fabric for damage; replace and properly secure it, as needed.

Once the upstream area has been vegetated or stabilized, the brush barrier should be removed and the underlying area revegetated.