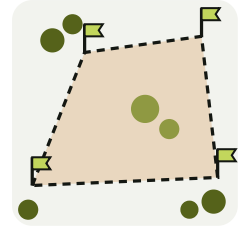


Land clearing in the Charlotte area

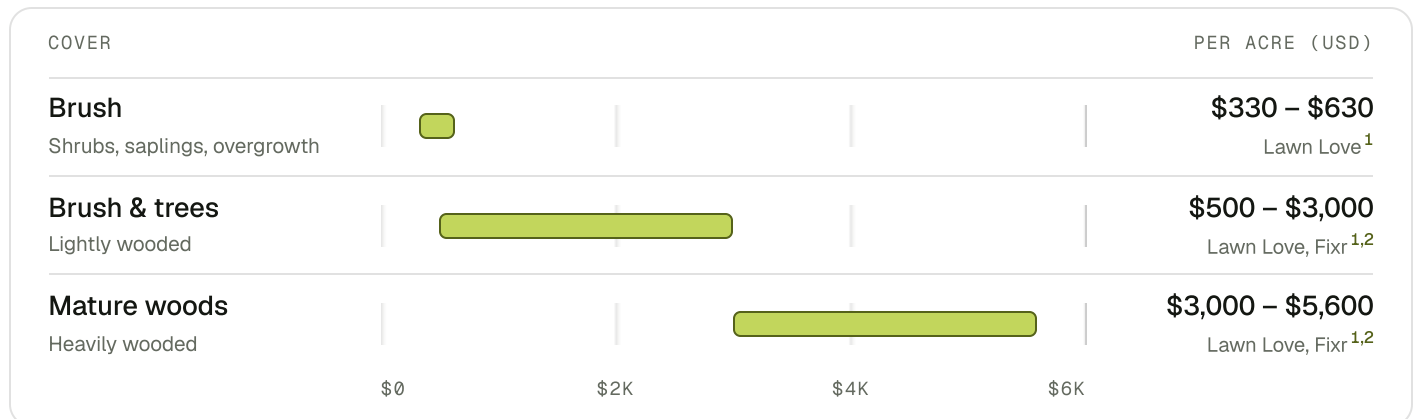
Costs, permits and next steps (2026)

Typical costs per acre, what moves the price, how the clearing methods compare, the permits that can apply in North and South Carolina, and what to ask a crew before you sign.



TYPICAL COST PER ACRE

What's on the land matters more than how much land.



National cost guides, so local prices vary: a starting point, not a quote. Bands combine both guides. Lawn Love (Dec 27, 2025): brush \$330–\$630, lightly forested \$580–\$2,100, heavily forested \$3,300–\$5,600 per acre. Fixr (Jan 31, 2025): lightly wooded \$500–\$2,000, heavily forested \$3,000–\$5,000. We widened the top of brush & trees to \$3,000 to leave room for local pricing.

BALLPARK BY SIZE

Total for the whole job, before stumps, grading or extras (our arithmetic on the bands above)

ACRES	BRUSH	BRUSH & TREES	MATURE WOODS
½ acre	\$100 – \$400	\$200 – \$1,500	\$1,500 – \$2,800
1 acre	\$300 – \$700	\$500 – \$3,000	\$3,000 – \$5,600
2 acres	\$600 – \$1,300	\$1,000 – \$6,000	\$6,000 – \$11,200
3 acres	\$900 – \$1,900	\$1,500 – \$9,000	\$9,000 – \$16,800
5 acres	\$1,600 – \$3,200	\$2,500 – \$15,000	\$15,000 – \$28,000

Rounded to the nearest \$100. Small jobs often carry a minimum charge, so a half-acre can cost more than this.

WHAT MOVES THE PRICE

Density and tree size

Brush goes fast. Big trees mean felling, cutting up and more machine time.

Stumps and roots (grubbing)

Often priced separately. Lawn Love puts stump removal at \$130–\$350 per stump.¹

Debris: mulch, haul or burn

Mulching in place avoids hauling; hauling adds trucks and disposal fees. Burning has its own rules (page 2).

Terrain and access

Slopes, wet ground and tight gates slow machines down. Lawn Love lists clearing at \$120–\$265 an hour.¹

Acreage

More acres cost more in total, but getting machines to the site is a fixed cost, spread over more ground.

Permits and erosion control

Bigger jobs may need a plan, silt fence and inspections. Fixr puts permits at \$150–\$1,500.²

METHODS COMPARED

Four ways to clear a lot.

METHOD	HOW IT WORKS, AND WHAT IT SUITS	WATCH FOR
Forestry mulching \$400–\$600/acre (Fixr); about \$450 (Lawn Love) ^{1,2}	One machine grinds brush and small trees into mulch where they stand. Suits brush, lightly wooded land, trails and fence lines, and keeps the topsoil in place.	Stumps stay in the ground under a mulch layer, so the lot isn't build-ready on its own. The price rises with density.
Clear and haul Full clearing + grubbing	Trees cut, stumps and roots pulled, debris trucked away. Suits homesites, driveways and anything that needs a clean, buildable pad.	Usually the priciest route: hauling and disposal fees add up, and bare soil needs erosion control.
Clear and burn Debris burned on-site	Debris is piled and burned on the property instead of hauled. Suits rural tracts where the rules and setbacks can be met.	Strict rules apply (below), it's restricted on poor air-quality days, and many crews near town won't do it.
Selective clearing Thinning, underbrushing	Brush and chosen trees come out; the trees you mark stay. Suits shade, privacy, views and park-like lots.	Flag keepers before work starts and agree how close machines may go to their roots.

Will the timber pay for it? Usually not on small lots. Fixr notes that lumber companies will often remove valuable trees for free in exchange for the wood,² but loggers typically want larger tracts (often 10–20+ acres) of the right species and size. A consulting forester can tell you whether a sale is realistic.

PERMITS AND RULES

Check these before the first tree comes down.

A summary, not legal advice. Rules change and local programs can be stricter, so confirm with the agency for your address, and ask your crew what they handle.

North Carolina

MECKLENBURG + 5 COUNTIES

- **Erosion control plan.** Needed when land disturbance covers more than one acre: filed at least 30 days before work and approved before you begin. Erosion control itself is required at any size.³
- **Local programs.** Charlotte, Mecklenburg County and some other counties and towns run their own erosion control programs, which can be stricter than the state's. Ask your city or county.³
- **Burn permit.** The N.C. Forest Service requires a free permit to burn in or within 500 feet of woodland between midnight and 4 p.m. No burning at all during a state burn ban.⁴
- **Air quality rules.** Only land-cleared plant growth may be burned, with conditions on timing, wind and distance from neighbors, and no new burns on Code Orange days in the Charlotte forecast area. Mecklenburg County Air Quality has its own open-burning rules: check with them first.⁵

South Carolina

YORK + LANCASTER

- **Stormwater permit.** Disturbing one acre or more needs construction stormwater permit coverage through SC DES (Department of Environmental Services). Smaller sites can still need a notification form.⁶
- **County review.** York County reviews land disturbance plans locally. In Lancaster County, or inside town limits, check with the county or town first.⁷
- **Burn notification.** Outside city and town limits, state law requires you to notify the S.C. Forestry Commission before burning outdoors. Towns set their own rules.⁸

Both states

- **Call 811 before anyone digs.** In North Carolina, contact NC 811 three full working days ahead so underground lines get marked; in South Carolina, contact SC811. Stump grinding and grubbing are digging.⁹
- **Water and wetlands.** Streams, ponds, lake shores and wetlands can have protected buffers. If water runs through or along the lot, ask your county before clearing near it.

■ BEFORE YOU HIRE

Ten questions to ask a contractor.

- 01 **Is the price per acre, per hour or for the whole job?** And is there a minimum charge?
- 03 **What happens to the debris?** Mulched in place, hauled off or burned, and who pays any disposal fees.
- 05 **Who handles permits and the erosion control plan?** And are those costs in the quote?
- 07 **Who calls 811, and when?**
- 09 **When can you start, and how long will it take?** What happens if it rains?
- 02 **What exactly is included?** Felling, stumps, root raking, debris removal, final grading.
- 04 **Are stumps ground or pulled, and how deep?** It matters if you plan to build or plant.
- 06 **Are you insured?** Ask for proof of liability coverage, and workers' comp if they have a crew.
- 08 **How will you protect the trees I'm keeping, plus wells, septic, fences and the driveway?**
- 10 **Can I get it in writing, with the payment schedule?** Avoid paying most of it up front.

■ PRE-CLEARING CHECKLIST

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Know your boundaries. Find your plat or survey and mark the corners, so nobody clears the neighbor's trees. | ☐ Mark what stays. Flag keeper trees and anything machines must avoid. |
| ☐ Measure the disturbed area. Over one acre usually means an erosion control plan (page 2). | ☐ Check HOA and deed rules, plus any town tree or buffer rules. |
| ☐ Locate wells, septic and buried lines. Request 811 marking before work. | ☐ Decide on debris: mulch, haul or burn. It changes the price. |
| ☐ Plan access. Gate width, a firm route for trucks, where equipment parks. | ☐ Get two or three written quotes on the same scope, so they compare fairly. |

Ready for real numbers?

Describe your lot once and up to three local crews who work your county will quote. Free, no obligation.

quotechecker.io

■ SOURCES (CHECKED OCTOBER 5, 2026)

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|---|---|
| <p>1 Lawn Love, "How Much Does it Cost to Clear Land?" Updated Dec 27, 2025.
lawnlove.com/blog/land-clearing-cost/</p> <p>3 NC DEQ, Erosion and Sediment Control FAQs and local programs.
deq.nc.gov/.../erosion-and-sediment-faqs</p> <p>5 NC open burning rules, 15A NCAC 02D .1900, and NC DEQ Division of Air Quality.
deq.nc.gov/.../open-burning-regulations</p> <p>7 York County, SC, Stormwater plan review.
yorkcountysc.gov/382/Plan-Review</p> <p>9 NC 811, "Call three full working days prior to digging."
nc811.org</p> | <p>2 Fixr, "Land Clearing Cost." Updated Jan 31, 2025.
fixr.com/costs/land-clearing-and-building-site-preparation</p> <p>4 N.C. Forest Service, Open Burning Permits (modified Sep 23, 2026).
ncagr.gov/divisions/nc-forest-service/open-burning-permits</p> <p>6 SC DES, Stormwater: construction activities.
des.sc.gov/.../stormwater-construction-activities</p> <p>8 S.C. Forestry Commission, burning notification.
scfc.gov/notify</p> |
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Estimates, not quotes. Every price here is a ballpark from published national cost guides. Your site, access and the crew you pick set the real number. This guide is general information, not legal, engineering or financial advice.

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