

About weeds

Not all plants in our gardens are welcome. Weeds frequently appear amid those we nurtured since they were seedlings. Weeds out-compete, crowding desirable plants and shading them, draining limited water resources, and extracting the restricted amount of soil nutrients.

If weeds were all ugly, the problem would be small. Unfortunately, that is far from true. Virtually any kind of plant can become a weed; “weediness potential” does not depend on whether it is grassy or broadleaved, if it flowers only once before it dies or if it is a long-lived perennial. Several weeds started out as garden plants, but were so successful they escaped into the wild, posing problems for other plants and animal species.



*Green Fountain
Grass*

Green fountain grass, an attractive ornamental, appeared as a weed in several natural areas. It threatened the environment for native species. It is now on Nevada’s noxious weed list, meaning it cannot be sold, and should be removed if has been planted. All around the country, there are lovely flowering plants that must be eradicated.

Not all weeds were introduced. Some arrived in agricultural seed; some drifted down a waterway and found a safe haven; birds carried others to areas where they could become established.

They arrived without natural enemies. Where they originated, most plants evolved along with insects or microorganisms that prevented them from becoming dominant. When people introduce a new garden plant, however, they want to deter pests. That is reasonable, unless the plant jumps garden borders and becomes invasive.

Weed control is one activity that gardeners, landscapers and farmers perform. Keeping the weed population to a minimum conserves water and nutrients.

Most people use a few weeding methods. They are - prevention, stopping weeds from getting into the garden, then physical, biological and chemical control. Most of the time, no single method can control all weeds, and people need to use two or three.

Infestations could be prevented by keeping out all incidental seeds, but that would mean eliminating significant parts of the garden experience, like fresh air and birds. Making sure that pots from the nursery are weed-free is a start, but rarely enough. Even assiduous gardeners occasionally find that an unwelcome item has taken root. A sprinkling of invading plants will appear in the best maintained garden.

Use other methods when prevention fails. The first is the traditional system – using a hoe and a rake to chop and pull young plants out.

Herbicides are a common way to rid a yard of weeds. These chemicals are easy to find, but might be too easy.

Although called “weed killers,” that is a misnomer. These are chemicals designed to get rid of plants, with no distinction between desirable landscape plants and problematic weeds.



Weed Control

Plants have been damaged or worse because a chemical was used incorrectly. At Cooperative Extension, there is a publication that describes the kinds of damage herbicides can cause.

It is crucial to use the right herbicide. The containers of each these products are labeled with all the information needed to use them successfully. The key is – read the label.

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