



Healthy Garden Workshop Series

Tips for Weeding and Removing Invasive Plants

What is a Weed?

- Any plant growing in cultivated ground that injures a crop or desired vegetation, or it disfigures the place; and is an unsightly, useless, or injurious plant.
- *Perennial Weed* – a plant having a life cycle of more than two years, such as a dandelion and thistle. This weed type is difficult to control as it has large root systems.
- *Annual Weed* is a plant that usually germinates, flowers, and dies in one year - such as crabgrass. These weeds are generally easier to control, however they usually produce a lot of seed for future generations.

Why do we weed?

Weeds compete with our desired plants for light, moisture and nutrients. Generally birds, pollinators and other wildlife won't use weeds and exotic invasive weeds for food and shelter as they've not evolved with these plants and prefer native plants.

How Do We Weed?

1 - Weed Prevention – This is the best practice as nature doesn't tolerate bare ground.

- *Cover crops (green manure)* – useful for vegetable gardening, especially legumes such as vetches and annual clovers because they suppress weeds through shading, competition and allelopathy. Cover crops add nutrients back into the soil by fixing atmospheric nitrogen (legumes) and leaving the vegetative matter on top of the soil to decompose.
- *Hardwood Mulch* 4 – 6" thick over newspaper stops weed seed germination by interrupting contact with soil, retains soil moisture and adds organic matter back into the soil.
- *Grass Clippings* (especially composted) smothers out weeds, adds organic matter and nutrients back into the soil.
- *Plastic Sheetting* – *black or clear is used to choke out weeds and heat up the soil for a time period before planting your garden*

2 - Controlling Existing Weeds

- *Hand Pulling* – Effective on small scale gardening not used on large scale agriculture due its labor intensity. A great time to hand weed is after a soaking rain to get the whole root system.
- *Tilling* – good for annual weeds as it's effective in disrupting its life cycle. This isn't recommended for perennial weeds as the root system isn't affected and with some weeds makes the problem worse (Bermuda grass, yellow nutsedge) as it spreads roots. It also often opens up the soil to existing weed seed germination.
- *Herbicides* – Effective for large scale agriculture situations and for exotic invasive plant control. For small scale gardening herbicides are not recommended due to environmental concerns.

Common Weeds

Annuals

Crabgrass
Crown Vetch

Perennials

Bermuda grass
Garlic Mustard
Purple Loosetrife

Vines

Poison Ivy vs. Virginia creeper
Mile-A-Minute

Shrubs

Honeysuckle
Japanese Knotweed

Trees

Tree of heaven
Mulberry

Volunteer Opportunities to Remove Invasive Plants from Public Areas

Maryland

Montgomery County – MNCPPC Weed Warriors – www.weedwarriors.org
Maryland Native Plant Society - <http://www.mdflora.org/>

Virginia

Virginia Native Plant Society - <http://www.vnps.org/>
Green Spring Gardens - www.fairfaxcounty.gov/PARKS/gsgp/

District of Columbia

Friends of U.S. National Arboretum – <http://www.fona.org/>
Friends of Rock Creek Park - <http://www.friendsofrockcreek.org/>

