



## Gardening Tips & Techniques: Weed Management

This time of year, plants are really starting to get established in the garden. Usually, however, the weeds aren't far behind! Weeds in the garden use nutrients, water, root space, and sunlight that would otherwise support your chosen garden plants. Weeds can also harbor pests and carry diseases that can spread to cultivated plants. Here are some basic ways to keep ahead of the weeds and help maintain a healthy garden!

### ID

- It may go without saying, but we'll say it, just in case. Make sure that weed you're about to pull is actually a weed! Books, internet image searches, or an experienced gardening friend are all good resources. If you really can't figure it out, send us a photo and we'll let you know whether you're looking at a vegetable or a weed!

### Hand Pulling

- Hand weeding is the best method to use with larger weeds. Gloves are a good idea, to protect your hands from thistles and poison ivy. Firmly grasp the weed at its base, right above the soil, and give it a slow and steady pull. Your goal is to remove as much of the root as possible so the weed doesn't grow back. [Weeding tools](#) can help.
- It's ok to put most weeds in the compost, as long as they haven't gone to seed. Also avoid composting invasive plants like Japanese knotweed, Canada thistle, and bindweed.

### Cultivating

- At Grow Pittsburgh, we love to cultivate! Cultivation is the process of disturbing the soil when weeds are very small, so they never get big enough to be hand pulled. To cultivate, use a [hand tool](#) or a hoe. We prefer [stirrup hoes](#), as they efficiently chop down little weeds on both the push and pull. It can take a little time to get used to using tools to cultivate, but give it a chance. Once you learn, weed control becomes a lot quicker and easier!
- It's best to cultivate the soil on a hot, dry afternoon, so the weeds don't re-root. The little weeds should wilt quickly. By the next day or two they will have turned brown.
- Cultivation is a great method to use a day or two before mulching the soil.

### Mulching

- Mulching has many benefits, and weed control is probably at the top of that list! To mulch, simply place organic material, like straw, woodchips, or brown leaves, on the soil under your plants. A layer of cardboard or newspaper underneath the organic material creates added weed protection.
- Mulching works best when it's done over a weed-free area of soil, so spend a little time hand-pulling and cultivating before placing your mulch.
- Mulch also conserves water and keeps soil from eroding. Over the growing season, it begins to break down and add nutrients and organic matter to the soil. You can leave it on the soil over the winter and reuse or compost what's left in the spring. Mulching is one of the best tools organic gardeners have for maintaining healthy soil and plants!

*Please see the photo on the following page.*



Mulched kale and herb bed at the Rodale Institute Experimental Farm in Kutztown, PA.