



How-To: **WEEDING**

Weeds steal water and nutrients from crops, and can cause shading. Here are some tried and true weed management techniques.



VOLUNTEERS WEEDING AT
BRADDOCK FARMS



USING STIRRUP HOES TO
CULTIVATE



STUDENTS REMOVE WEEDS FROM
THEIR GARDEN

WHAT IS A WEED?

A weed is a plant that we didn't plant and don't want to grow in the garden. Weeds take up valuable garden resources like sunlight, space, water, and nutrients that could be used by crops.

Weeds enter the garden in different ways. Seeds may be in the garden soil already, or brought to the garden in soil, compost, by birds, or by wind. Roots of certain types of weeds, like some grasses, produce rhizomes, or creeping root-stalks, of the original plant. These roots and rhizomes can spread into garden beds. Certain food or cover crops, like dill, cilantro, or buckwheat can create weed problems for years into the future if they are permitted to go to seed.

HOW TO WEED

It's easiest to pull weeds within a few days after a rain, so the ground is soft. However, if the ground is very wet, weeds pulled and left in the garden may re-root.

Take a good look at the crops in your garden and make sure you can identify which are the weeds and which are the crops. Consider wearing thin gloves to protect hands if you'll be weeding for a long time or if you need to remove spiny weeds.

Pull the weeds at the base of the root. Do your best to remove all of the roots from the ground; use a long, thin weeding tool or a trowel if needed. If the weeds are very close to the stems of crops, snap the weeds at ground level, to avoid disturbing the roots of the crop.

Pulled weeds that have not developed seeds and don't have roots with rhizomes can be put in a compost pile. If your weeds may spread through seed or roots, put them on a separate pile that you don't intend to use in the garden, or discard them in the trash.

PREVENTING WEEDS

While it's very hard to prevent all garden weeds, you can reduce the amount of hand weeding needed with these strategies:

1. Consider garden placement. If you are creating a garden or adding beds, be strategic about where to build. While turf and weeds growing in an area indicate good fertility and sun exposure, invasive weeds like bindweed, Canada thistle, or knotweed will be hard to eradicate.
2. Grow in raised beds or add borders to garden beds. A barrier will discourage weeds from spreading by their roots into the beds.



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3. Remove small weeds by *cultivating*. Use a hoe or cultivator tool to disturb the top layer of soil; slice just below the soil surface, breaking the weeds' stems. Cultivating works best from germination until weeds are a few inches tall, and is most effective on a hot, sunny day, so weeds wilt and die quickly.

4. A thick layer of mulch can keep weeds from growing around garden plants. When crops reach several inches tall, weed or cultivate, and place a layer of organic materials like straw or dry leaves around the plants. This mulch layer retains soil moisture and keeps weeds from growing. For more information, see the Info Hub sheet *Mulching*.