Weed
MANAGEMENT

Left photo: Bull Thistle

A beautiful landscape gives us pleasure. Serenity. Much time and money is spent coaxing and nurturing our plants. Then one day our peaceful space becomes a war zone. Invaders with ugly thistles appear and multiply voraciously. With no help from us, these ravenous weeds are bent on taking over.

What *is* a weed? The scholarly definition is "a plant out of place". Alas, it's man's revulsion to weeds that counts. Penn State's website says "weeds are plants whose undesirable qualities outweigh their good points". There are some beneficial weeds and others that are considered noxious and must be removed.

What Benefits Can Weeds Provide?

- Protect bare soil from erosion
- Improves soil by infusing it with organic matter
- Absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere
- Weeds can be a habitat for birds, worms and inserts
- Some weeds have powerful, medicinal properties *and* are edible

When and How are Weeds Problematic?

- They can compete with desirable plants for light, nutrients, water and space
- Some overpower desirable plants, depleting soil moisture and nutrients
- They can harbor insects and disease that can spread to your plants
- Some weeds are a habitat for birds, worms and inserts
- Poisonous weeds are dangerous to you or your pets
- They are unattractive in texture, color and growth habit

Weed Management

Gardeners' Guild's philosophy to weed management is the least toxic approach. It's a combination of prevention, mechanical, biological and chemical only when necessary.

Prevention

- Plant Choices
  Most important. Right plant in the right place equals healthy vigorous plants. They will out-compete weeds.
- Mulching and Sheet Mulching
  Keeps soil cool and moist. Deprives weeds of light. Enhances soil structure. It can host insects that devour weeds. Sheet mulching is layering of cardboard, newspaper or even fabric. It serves as a weed barrier.
- Healthy Soil
  Feeding the soil with organic products including mulch and compost results in healthy plants.
- Water Management
  Gardeners' Guild recommends drip irrigation when appropriate. The water goes directly to the root of the plant, not in between. Spray irrigation is less precise and can encourage weed growth.
- Pre-emergent Herbicides
  Gardeners' Guild will use these products when needed to control weeds.

Fire Season

Dense, flammable weed growth puts your property at risk.

Consult with a professional who can help you with a fire mitigation plan.

Gardeners' Guild can consult with you on reducing risk by creating defensible space around a structure as well as a fire safe landscape plan. For open space areas we have a team to handle fire fuel reduction work.

We have 44 years of experience and certified experts to help!

Call us with questions!
(510) 439-3700

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GARDENERS' GUILD
NATURE'S TRUSTED PARTNER SINCE 1972

Weed Control

Have you ever noticed that after a heavy rain, weeds may seem to appear and flower suddenly? The list below describes how Gardeners' Guild's approach to controlling weeds once they have appeared.

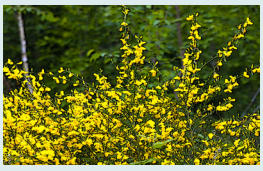
- Hand Pulling
  Works best when weeds are small and close to desirable plants. It 's more difficult for weeds with extensive root systems.
- Cultivating
  Using hoes, shovels and knives when managing small to moderate sized areas. This method will knock down weeds, then incorporate them into the soil as they decay.
- String Trimming
  Older weeds' top growth can be controlled with a string trimmer. Annual broadleaf weeds are more effecively controlled than annual grasses. This doesn't work on perennial weeds.
- Mowing
  Can prevent the formation and spread of weed seeds from broadleaf weeds by cutting off flower heads.
- Flaming
  Using a propane burner, the high heat bursts cell walls of the weeds. Although this method can effectively destroy many weeds, it is less effective for weeds with deep roots.
- Mulch
  Mulch is also used to smother weeds.

Weeds Common to the Bay Area

Oxalis/wood sorrel
Grows in lawns, flower beds, gardens; shrubs. A perennial, it blooms in spring. Grows and spreads rapidly. Once established it's very competitive. Hand-weeding must include digging out their bulbs. Best time - right before it blooms. Other methods include sheet mulching to smother. Some post emergent herbicides can be used successfully, but will need repeat treatment.

Annual bluegrass
Cool season biennial. Seen in turf, landscape areas, fields, vegetable crops. Dies in early summer. Control with handpulling, hoeing. Herbicides used with heavy infestation. Complete turf renovation sometimes required for heavy growth in turf.

Dandelion
Perennial that also is beneficial - as tea and other medicinal uses. High vitamin and mineral content. Likes full sun. Seed spreads by wind. Will crowd out desirable species by leaching nutrients. Multiple solutions required. Prevention is key. Diligent hand weeding and also fabric mulching are recommended. Herbicides used when necessary.



Scotch Broom
They are invasive -- growing in grasslands and forest habitats. Flowers and seeds are toxic to humans and livestock. Beware - they are also fire hazards. High vitamin and mineral content. Likes full sun. Seed spreads by wind. Will crowd out desirable species by leaching nutrients. Multiple solutions required. Prevention is key.

Crabgrass
Found in turfgrass areas. Summer annual that spreads by seed. Types include smooth and large crabgrass. Flowers between September - November. Best methods to control -cultural practices that increase turf vigor. Pick best turf species for your area, correct mowing and proper irrigation.

Miners Lettuce
Native winter annual broadleaf weed. Found in cool, damp areas such as the coast, orchards, gardens, vineyards and urban areas. Leaves sometimes cultivated and used in salads . However, can be toxic depending on level of soluble oxalates. They are realtively easy to control with hand pulling, mulching, using a hoe.

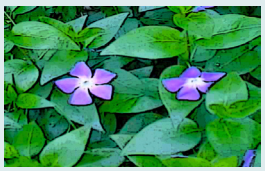
Beware of these Invasive Weeds!

This information is sourced from the California Invasive Plant Council.
If you notice any of the following plants have them removed.
Invasive plants damage our ecosystem by displacing native species, increase fire and flood danger and consuming valuable water. They are difficult to control. It's best to consult with a professional.

Ice Plants
These plants compete with native plants. Their seeds are carried from landscape settings to natural areas. Pieces of the plant can be washed into storm drains and become established. They grow in coastal areas on the side of freeways.

Licorice Plant
Seeds spread by wind. Spreading branches root wherever they make contact. They can and do displace native plants in coastal areas.

English or Cape Ivy
Distinguishing them from less invasive ivy is difficult. Invasive ivy will smother understory vegetation, kill trees and harbor non-native rats and snails.



Periwinkle/Vinca Major
Note: Vinca Minor is okay! Vinca Major's leaves are bigger. Their aggressive stems root wherever they touch soil. Spreads rapidly in shady creeks, drainage areas and chokes native plants.

Yellow Star Thistle
Bushy winter annual found in open hills, grass and open fields. Propogates rapidly by seed. Impacts native plants, water cycles and can poison livestock. Distinguished by long, stout, sharp pointed spines. Difficult to control once they are established.

Bull Thistle
Distinguished by showy purple blooms and sharp leaves. Grows readily where soil is disturbed/ Spreads rapidly. Blocks light, absorbs water and nutrients from soil choking out desired plants. Can be controlled by mowing or hand cutting before plants flower. More easily controlled with herbicides.

Himalaya Blackberry
Grows in dense thickets. Canes covered in thorns. Highly invasive and difficult to control. Grows up to 15' tall. Produces large blackberries. Leaches nutrients and water from desirable plants. Mechanical control or burning is effective for removing mature plants. Note:

Thank you to our sources for this article:
California Invasive Plant Council
UC Davis IPM
Sunset Magazine