

Weed

MANAGEMENT



Left photo: Bull Thistle

Is your once beautiful landscape a war zone? If weeds seem to be taking over, read our tips for dealing with them. Not all weeds are bad. But, some are invasive and will leach soil nutrients, weakening desired plants.

What Benefits Can Weeds Provide?

- Protects bare soil from erosion
- Improves soil by infusing it with organic matter.
- Absorbs carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.
- Weeds can be a habitat for birds, worms and insects.
- Some weeds have powerful, medicinal properties.

How to Manage Weeds

Gardeners' Guild's philosophy is the least toxic approach. A combination of prevention, mechanical, biological and chemical only when necessary. Know the difference between perennial and annual weeds. Perennials have tenacious roots and will grow back year after year. They are harder to control. Annual weeds die back each year and are somewhat easier to manage.

Prevention

- **Plant Choices**
Essential. Right plant in the right place equals healthy vigorous plants. They 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 is a weed barrier.
- **Healthy Soil**
Feed the soil with organic products, mulch and compost for 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.

Control

- **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 for small to moderate 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 effectively 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.



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Weeds Common to the Bay Area



Oxalis/wood sorrel - Perennial

Grows in lawns, flower beds, gardens; shrubs. Blooms in spring. Spreads rapidly. Once established it's very competitive. Hand-weeding must include digging out their bulbs - right before it blooms. Other methods - sheet mulching to smother. Post emergent herbicides can be used, but need repeat treatment.



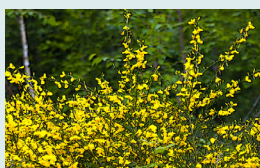
Bluegrass - Annual

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.



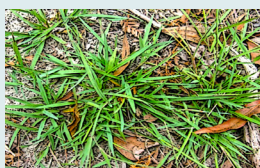
Dandelion - Perennial

Has some medicinal uses. High vitamin and mineral content. Likes full sun. Seed spreads by wind. Crowds out desirable species by leaching nutrients. Multiple solutions required. Prevention is key. Hand weeding and also fabric mulching are recommended. Herbicides used when necessary.



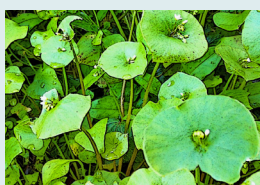
Scotch Broom - Perennial - Invasive

And a fire hazard. Grows in grasslands and forest habitats. Up to 30,000 seeds per plant. They are toxic to livestock. Seeds spread by wind, humans and animals. Out-compete desired plants. Multiple solutions required. Hand pull small ones. Chemicals are used for large infestations.



Crabgrass - Annual

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.

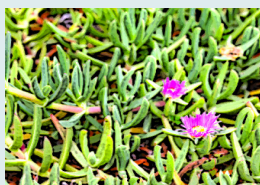


Miners Lettuce - Annual

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. Relatively easy to control with hand pulling, mulching, using a hoe.



Beware of these Invasive Weeds!



Ice Plants

These plants compete with natives. 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. Removal by hand pulling, mechanical means. Or, Glyphosate - as a last resort.



Licorice Plant

Seeds spread by wind. Spreading branches root wherever they make contact. They can and do displace native plants in coastal areas. Removal by hand pulling for small infestations. Herbicides may be needed for larger areas.



English or Cape Ivy

Invasive ivy will smother understory vegetation, kill trees and harbor non-native rats and snails. For removal - wear protective gear. Multiple solutions. One, hand pulling (8-10 feet). Dispose of plants. Large expanses can be rolled like a carpet.

Thank you to our sources for this article:

California Invasive Plant Council
UC Davis IPM
Sunset Magazine

