



## GARDEN NOTES

# WHACK YOUR WEEDS BEFORE WINTER

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Some people define a weed as simply “any plant that is out of place.”

“Many of these plants are able to come back to life even after I have poisoned, dug, swore at and stomped them to death. Why can’t my lawn figure out this trick?” asks Jerry Goodspeed, Utah State University Extension horticulturist.

Fall is a great time to control weeds, he says. One reason is the satisfaction you will enjoy from a long summer trying to kill them and knowing that snow will soon fly bringing the battle to a brief halt for the winter. The truth of the matter is that blanket of white will probably only disguise the wounded weeds that will spend the winter planning a new attack.

“I like to start fall weed control in the garden,” Goodspeed says. “By now, the sweet corn has died, I have intentionally killed the summer squash and the beets have been harvested and placed in the freezer. This leaves open garden space, exposing the weeds, so I can really harass them. As garden vegetables are removed, perennial weeds such as field bindweed (morning glory), mallow and dandelions can either be dug or sprayed with a non-selective herbicide (such as Roundup).

“Once the weeds are treated, give them two weeks to act dead, then till them into the soil. If nothing else, the tilling helps hide them until the snow covers them.” If the weeds have gone to seed, do not till them into the soil, he explains. After spraying them, wait until they look dead, then pull them out of the ground and dispose of them someplace away from the garden.

Lawn weeds can also be treated in the fall, which hopefully reduces their numbers the next spring, Goodspeed says. If all you have is annual weeds in your lawn (spurge, crabgrass), don’t worry about them. Once a good freeze comes along, they will die. It’s perennial weeds such as dandelions, field bindweed and oxalis that must be treated.

If there are only a few weeds, don’t bother spraying. Simply remove them by hand right after watering the lawn. If your lawn is more yellow or white than green, consider using a broadleaf weed killer. Getting rid of these weeds in the fall should humble them sufficiently that they won’t rear their ugly heads until well after Easter, or possibly Memorial Day.

This is also the time to get aggressive with weeds in perennial flower beds, he adds. It is extremely difficult to control perennial weeds once they get established in-between the non-

weedy perennial flowers. Go through the perennial beds and hoe, pull and stomp on as many perennial weeds as possible. Then, cover the ground with two to three inches of good organic compost or mulch. Many garden centers or nurseries carry it in bags or offer it in bulk. Using a good mulch to cover the ground also hides the problem until the snow flies, Goodspeed says. Another benefit of covering the soil is it makes it more difficult for the weeds to begin growing. This is especially helpful in controlling early spring weeds that appear the day after the snow melts.

Fall weed control can save time and money, he says. Eliminating much of the weed problems now can save countless hours of labor and the expense of purchasing chemicals next year.

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