

LC581

**MANAGING WEEDS IN THE LANDSCAPE WITH FEWER CHEMICALS**

Homeowners wanting to control weeds in the garden and landscape without the use of chemicals have many control options. Hoeing and pulling weeds are the obvious methods, but there are several others. In shrub beds and around woody ornamental plants, the use of mulches (such as bark dust) will inhibit the germination of seeds and provide some physical barrier to their emergence, besides conserving water and improving soil tilth. Landscape fabrics, available in garden stores, are also effective in controlling weeds, but should be used with care since they can provide good cover for small wildlife, such as mice.

Another excellent technique for weed control around shrubs and woody ornamentals is the use of competitive plantings. This approach is based on the idea that nature abhors a vacuum. If you have some bare spaces under your trees or shrubs, aggressive herbaceous perennials like hostas or daylilies can provide significant landscape value and still reduce your weeding because they out-compete weeds for space.

In the vegetable garden, mulch works wonders during the growing season to slow down weed competition. Proper placement of water with drip irrigation can also slow weed growth since weeds need water to germinate. The unwatered areas will not have as competitive a weed population.

The use of transplants will give some vegetable crops a head start in acquiring the sunlight and nutrients needed for growth. It's the competition for sunlight (which drives all plant growth) that makes some of our weeds so competitive and destructive.

Any reduction in tillage will reduce weed problems. Eventually, the weeds in the top several inches of soil will have germinated, and if you don't dig deep and bring new weeds to the surface, you will have fewer weed problems---assuming you don't let new weeds go to seed. Many weed seeds can live 10-plus years in the soil. Removing weeds before they go to seed is the key to long-term success. One way to reduce tillage in the garden is to use a raised bed system for planting.

Oregon State University Extension Service offers educational programs, activities, and materials--without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, and disabled veteran or Vietnam-era veteran status--as required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Oregon State University Extension Service is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Just as in woody landscapes, a competitive, tightly planted, vegetable bed can outcompete the weeds. However, be sure the crop plant has enough room to develop. Vegetables planted too close together may not produce a crop. That is why thinning new garden plantings early in the season is so important.

Also, if you continually fight weeds popping up in driveways and sidewalks, consider this simple solution. Fill in the cracks where weeds find soil to germinate. This was the strategy adopted by a city parks department and it led to a long-term reduction in spot spraying.

This publication based on the March 1, 1993 press release written by: Chip Bubl, Horticulture Agent, Columbia County Extension Office