



How to Prevent Vegetable Garden Weeds

Weeds can be 1 of the fastest-growing live plants you'll find in any vegetable garden. They grow quickly because most will sprout many more seeds than desirable garden plants. Left unchecked, they will spread, crowd out vegetable plants and make harvesting a challenge. Weeds can be removed with mechanical, chemical or natural means but they can never be permanently eliminated. To prevent vegetable garden weeds, use a combination of weed control methods during every gardening season.

Steps

- 1 Choose large, leafy plants that shade the ground from the sun's rays, which cause weeds to proliferate.**
When designing your seasonal vegetable garden, plan to include shade plants that suppress weeds include squash, pumpkin, melons, tomatoes and potatoes.
- 2 Rotate crops.** When planning your garden at the beginning of the season, vary the placement of your favorite vegetable plants to slow down weed growth in last year's exposed garden areas. Rotate shade plants with those plants that have smaller leaf spreads, such as lettuce and garlic.
- 3 Clear the vegetable garden area of all weeds and non-beneficial plant matter.** If your dormant garden area is covered with weeds, be sure to remove as many as possible before planting this season's crops. The fewer of last year's weeds that you start with, the less you will have to remove this year.
- 4 Lay down ground cover.** A black plastic layer placed over garden rows will prevent the sun's rays and heat from expediting weed germination. Other weed prevention covers include covering bare soil with organic mulch mixes such as bark chips, straw and layered newspaper.
- 5 Schedule regular weed pulling sessions.** Pulling weeds by hand or utilizing a mechanical weed pulling tool on a regular basis prevents weeds from becoming unmanageable and difficult to remove. Remember that the more a weed's root system spreads, the harder it is to pull up from the soil.
- 6 Avoid disturbing soil when harvesting garden plants.** When breaks in the soil around your vegetable plants appear, weed seeds can easily burrow into the soil. Harvest your vegetable plants as gently as possible to prevent soil disturbances.
- 7 Rent a rototiller.** If weeds become unmanageable, a rototiller can quickly remove them without too much physically-demanding labor by the operator. Rototillers are one of the fastest mechanical weed removal methods but overuse can deplete the soil of nutrients and beneficial worms. Use rototillers sparingly.

Tips

- Practice ergonomics when removing weeds by hand or machine. Wear a back brace when pulling weeds to avoid sore lumbar muscles and always use garden gloves to avoid skin irritations and cuts.
- Choose a ground cover made with organic, chemical-free ingredients to prevent toxins from leaching into your garden soil

Warnings

- Chemical weed removal methods can quickly eradicate areas with excessive weed growth, but over application can

deplete the ground of valuable nutrients and microbes. Use chemical weed removal products sparingly.

Sources and Citations

- <http://www.freeplants.com/controlling-weeds-vegetable-garden.htm>
- <http://www.cheapvegetablegardener.com/2009/11/how-to-prevent-weeds-in-your-garden.html>
- <http://www.vegetablegardeners.com/growingvegetables/vegetable-gardening/avoiding-weeds-in-your-vegetable-garden.htm>

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