



Summer Garden Tips: Be Proactive!

Nancy and Pierre Moitrier

No matter your level of gardening knowledge, your garden's size, or your garden's style, weeding is an obligatory task that will make your established garden healthier and more beautiful. Weeds not only compete with desirable plants for light, water, and nutrients, they can also host pests and diseases. Follow these easy, organic approaches to annual and perennial weed control:

KNOW THE SEASONAL CYCLE OF WEEDS. Soil temperature dictates when specific weed seeds will germinate. Different weeds will grow in January than will grow in July. With each different season—winter, spring, summer, fall—different weeds thrive.

KNOW THE LIFE CYCLE OF THE WEEDS. Annual weeds will die after they flower and set seed. Perennial weeds will persist year after year and continue to produce flowers and disperse seeds until their roots are killed.

KNOW THY ROOTS. Does the weed have a tap root (dandelion), a fibrous root (chickweed), or adventitious roots (English ivy)? Is it a bulb (*Ornithogalum*)?

KNOW EFFECTIVE CONTROL STRATEGIES.

- With all weeds, the most important point is to prevent seeds from dispersing. Remember, one year seedin', seven years weedin'!
- Spend 30 minutes weeding once a week as opposed to 2 hours weeding once a month to regularly remove weeds before they form seeds.
- Soils are more friable after a rainfall, which makes removing weeds much easier.
- Select the appropriate tool. A flat shovel can be used to remove large areas of fibrous rooted weeds. A hoe can be used to remove seedling weeds, while a digging knife can be used to remove bulbs, tap-rooted weeds, and individual weeds.

- With annual weeds, once seeds are set, the plant is dying. Application of an herbicide will be pointless at this stage of the plant's life. No need to grub out the root, just discard plants and seeds in yard waste, not in compost.
- With perennial weeds, it is critical to extract the entire root.
- Minimize soil disturbance which will expose latent weed seeds to light, causing them to germinate and create a new infestation. Follow up with a mulch application in disturbed areas.
- A 2-inch layer of shredded mulch will minimize germination of undesirable weed seeds.
- Armed with these proactive tips you will be able to suppress weed populations, which will eventually lead to weed-free-garden nirvana, and isn't that what we all strive for? 🌱



NANCY AND PIERRE MOITRIER operate *Designs for Greener Gardens*, a boutique gardening company that specializes in designing, creating, developing, and maintaining distinctive gardens of all styles. Pierre hails from France and brings the charm of the Old World to their garden creations. Nancy's 40 years of gardening experience combined with her design knowledge and innate artistic eye add a superior dimension to their garden projects. Follow *Designs for Greener Gardens* on Facebook.

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