

Weed Control is a Year Round Job

More resources and tips at cob.org/weeds

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Overwintering weeds			Spring perennials and new seedlings			Most weeds flower and go to seed				Fall germination of some weeds	
			Replenish mulch							Replenish mulch after first rains	
Remove woody weeds						Weed-before-they-seed				Uproot perennial weeds	
			Treat small seedlings in pavement cracks								

Weed cycles

Some weeds, like dandelions, can produce thousands of seeds. Those seeds can remain viable for up to 20 years in the case of Hedge Bindweed.

Preventing flowers from going to seed, and seeds from germinating, are top priorities to successfully managing weeds without chemical herbicides.



Each dandelion head can produce 200+ seeds. A single plant can produce 10 flowers, for every dandelion that is pulled before it goes to flower is preventing 20,000 seeds.

Mulch

Mulch suppresses weeds by shading the soil and as a physical barrier to germination of annual weed seeds. Mulch is most effective when applied immediately after weeding.

Mulch comes in different textures and materials, there is no single "best" mulch for all situations.

For weed suppression, coarse-textured mulch applied 3 - 4 inches is optimal.



Coarse bark and coarse wood chips (pictured here) help prevent weeds from germinating.

What to focus on

Fall through spring, when the soil is moist, it is easiest to pull weeds. Focus on uprooting perennial weeds once the ground softens with fall rains such as Creeping Buttercup. In the winter, it will be easier to remove woody weeds like Himalayan Blackberry.

During the summer, weed before they seed; this will help maintaining weeds in future years.

See other side for more details on seasonal focal points to manage weeds naturally.



Hori-hori, spade fork, mattock and gardening bag or bucket are all helpful tools in managing weeds without using chemical herbicides.

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Winter

When conditions are warm and dry enough to work comfortably outside, this can be an effective time to remove perennial and smaller woody weeds like Himalayan Blackberry. Roots pull more easily from damp soil. Don't work on the soggy soil, as it can harm soil by compaction.

What:
English Ivy, Creeping Buttercup, seedlings of English Holly and Cherry Laurel, Himalayan Blackberry, Dandelion and tree seedlings that crop up in the wrong place. Hedge Bindweed roots can be forked from beds where they grew last summer.

How:

1. Spade fork to uproot perennial and small woody weeds.
2. Hori-hori soil knife, grass scythe, trowel for smaller weeds.
3. A weed wrench is useful for woody weeds with up to 3-inch stem diameter.
4. Apply coarse textured woody mulch over exposed soil right after weeding.

Spring

All weeds begin rapid growth, along with garden plants. Focus on weeds while they are small. Follow the flowers to remove those weeds before they have time to go to seed. Spot mulch to cover soil exposed during weeding.

What:
Emerging shoots on perennial weeds such as Hedge Bindweed, Horsetail and Creeping Buttercup. Woody weed seedlings. New weed seedlings.

How:

1. Spade fork to uproot perennial weeds, small woody weeds and other emerging weeds.
2. Use a hori-hori soil knife, grass scythe, trowel for smaller weeds. Many annual weeds pull easily by hand.
3. Use a flame weeder to burn weeds in driveways and gravel. Repeat two to three times in a week or two; this will deplete energy reserves in roots.
4. Apply coarse textured woody mulch over exposed soil right after weeding. Tiny weed seedling with just two to four leaflets can be smothered with coarse woody mulch.

Summer

Weed seed is spread at this time of year, as seed heads and berries mature. Weed seeds travel in different ways: some are blown in with the wind, others are deposited by birds and other wildlife. It can be more difficult to uproot weeds from dry soil. Focus on cutting away the top growth and flowering stems to subdue weeds.

What:
All weed types.

How:

1. Weed before they seed: remove flower heads as they appear, especially for annual seeds. This can be done with string trimmer for large areas.
2. Avoid disturbing the soil. Use a hori-hori soil knife, grass scythe, or a sharp shovel edge to shave weeds off at grade. Cover with mulch afterward.
3. Repeated defoliation will weaken and kill weeds over time. Use hand tools or spot treat small weeds with organic weed sprays. Flame weeders can be used on paved areas.

Fall

As fall wetness returns, several types of weeds will germinate and then overwinter as seedlings, ready to resume growth in spring. Weed and mulch in fall for fewer weeds in spring.

What:
Annual weeds like Herb Robert and Nettle, perennial weeds like Dandelion, Creeping Buttercup and others.

How:

1. Wait until after the first good rains to mulch bare ground and smother weed seeds. Mulch can also be applied directly over seedlings that are less than an inch tall.
2. Hori-hori, grass scythe, hand trowels, and a spade fork are good fall weeding tools.

Questions?

- Call the Garden Hotline at (206) 633-0224
- Visit gardenhotline.org
- Or visit cob.org/weeds

