



Natural Weed Control

About the Author:



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Why Practice Natural Weed Control?

There are several benefits of natural weed control.

Bay Friendly

The Chesapeake Bay is an amazing natural resource for Maryland, and our nation. In addition to its natural beauty, the bay is home to an abundance of wildlife and plants. However, as the population density in our area has increased, so has the pollution flowing into the bay. In fact, the pesticides and herbicides that we use for weed control on our landscapes can eventually end up in the bay and threaten fish, birds, and beneficial insects. If you check the labels, you will see that some of the more common herbicides are labeled as *environmental hazards*.

When we practice natural weed control, we help prevent the run-off of chemicals that can threaten the health and balance of the Chesapeake Bay eco-system.

Kid & Pet Friendly

If you have children or pets it's even more important to practice natural weed control. The chemicals in herbicides have been linked to several diseases and health disorders, most notably cancer and reproductive disorders.

In addition to the danger of direct ingestion by young children and pets, the rain water run-off from these herbicides can also get into the drinking water supply.

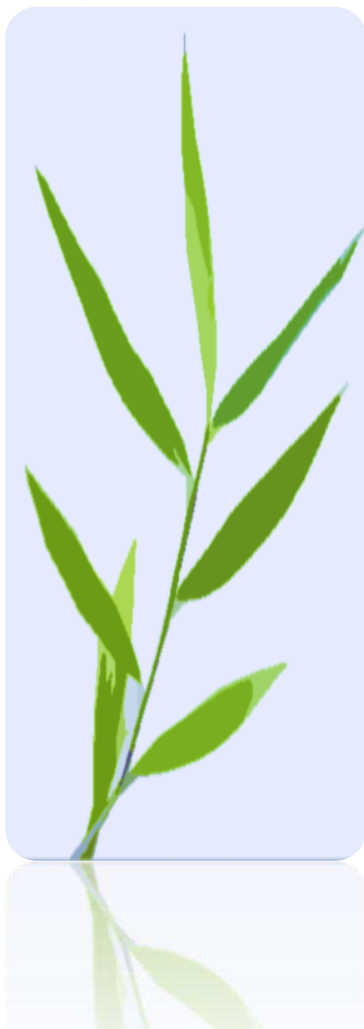


Exercise and Stress Relief

There's nothing like the feeling of satisfaction that can come from a day of hard work in the garden. You would be amazed at the stress relief that a little regular weeding can provide. Not only from the physical activity, but also from the removal of a source of stress that an untended garden can be.

Healthier, Thriving Gardens

Weeds can choke out desirable plants and suck away valuable nutrients. In addition, many of the invasive species are not native to this area, and therefore are free from natural plant-eaters and parasites that can help to keep their growth in check. As such, invasives can really be a threat in our gardens. Taking the time to weed helps our desirable plants to thrive and grow without having to face “stronger” competition from the weeds.



Decreases Weeds Over Time

Did you know that for some invasive species like Japanese Stiltgrass, just one weed can produce up to 1000 seeds? It's not just airborne seeds that are the problem. Seeds are well adapted to spreading by “hopping on board” shoes, tires, soil from transplanted plants, or even on your clothing. By practicing natural weed control, you can help to halt the spread of the seeds. This translates to progressively less weeds in your garden, in your lawn, and on your neighbors lawn.



It's Rewarding!

Yes, natural weed control is rewarding in more ways than one. We've already highlighted a number of the rewards -- from helping to foster healthier, more beautiful gardens to stress relief and exercise. Not to mention, helping to increase the "overall health" of the neighborhood and ecosystem.

Controlling Weeds in Garden Beds

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!

Weed Regularly and by the Root Before Weeds Go to Seed

As we mentioned previously, just one weed can produce up to 1000 seeds! By weeding regularly, and before weeds flower and seed, you're saving yourself a lot of work down the road, and you'll help to prevent the weeds from spreading to adjacent garden beds or lawns.



Control Adjacent Weeds

If you are only tending to the weeds in your garden, and not paying attention to those in your lawn, you're only treating part of the problem. The weeds in your lawn can eventually wreak havoc in your garden. The key thing in controlling weeds in lawns is AVOIDANCE.

You can control weeds in your lawn with the following practices & treatments:

- Mowing grass to the correct height.
- Removing perennial weeds from your lawn by the root before they flower and spread seed. (Yes, this same rule applies to lawns.)
- Nourishing your lawn so that it thrives and outcompetes the weeds.
- Using the correct seed for your area and over seeding bare spots.
- Soil testing & liming to adjust pH appropriately.
- Applying corn meal gluten, a natural preventive treatment.
- Spot treating weeds with vinegar.
- Adding organic matter to help your lawn to thrive.

Mulch Early and Regularly

Once you've cleared away the weeds, cover the area with newspaper, cardboard, or an old sheet and then apply a layer of mulch. The mulch will help to control weed growth because it limits the light required for weed establishment.

And...if you mulch early in the spring, before weeds have started to grow, you are way ahead in the game. Be sure to apply the right thickness of mulch. If applied too thinly the weeds will grow right through. And if applied too thickly, the mulch can stay wet between rains and allow the weeds to grow and germinate right in the mulch.

Also, be sure to fill your garden beds with shrubs, perennials and ground covers so there will be no room for the weeds!

NOTE: Avoid using landscape fabric under the mulch as weeds and roots can grow right into the fabric making removal very difficult. Newspaper, old fabric or sheets work much better!



Maintain a Deep Cut Edge

By maintaining a deep cut edge and controlling the border where your lawn meets your garden, you can help to control the spread of weeds as well as the spread of grass into your garden.



Use a Soaker Hose to Focus Watering

One of the basics in controlling weeds in garden beds is using a soaker hose to focus watering on plants that need it. By providing water right where it's needed, you can help plants to thrive by directly providing them with the nutrients they need.



A Note on Lasagna Gardening

Does the thought of all that weeding make you tired before you even get started?

What is Lasagna Gardening?

Lasagna gardening is a method of building a garden bed by applying a layer of wet cardboard or newspaper directly over existing “undesired” growth to smother the growth. Then alternating layers of “brown” and “green” organic matter are applied to form the nutrient layers for the garden. This results in a rich, airy soil where plants can thrive.

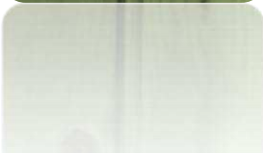
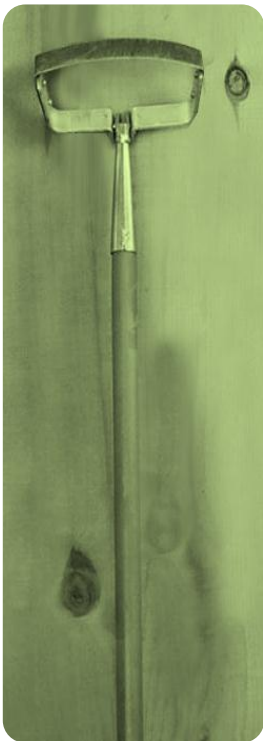
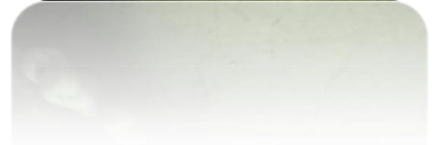
Why Use the Lasagna Method?

The biggest advantage of the lasagna method is that you avoid all the weeding and tilling associated with building a new garden by just smothering the existing growth. It’s a lot less strenuous, and it works great if you are creating a raised garden bed. Additionally, by using composted leaves and organic matter, its better for the environment.

Some Helpful Tools

Hori-hori

The word "hori" is a Japanese word that means "to dig". The hori-hori is a fabulous digging tool. It's heavy duty blade is sharp on both sides and has a serrated edge that's great for cutting through roots or hard soil.



Hula Hoe

The metal blade of the hula hoe is sharp on both edges and allows you to get that cutting action with a back and forth movement just below the surface -- without ending up with a pile of soil. The hula hoe is great for weeding in a veggie garden around plants and in the aisles. It also works well for some of the annual weeds in residential landscaping where the roots don't go very deep.

Natural Weed Killers

There are some natural chemical deterrents that are effective in controlling weeds when used properly.

- **Vinegar** applied directly to a plant, on a sunny day, will kill the weed by drawing the moisture out of the leaves of the plant. The “active ingredient” is acetic acid. Importantly, it will kill the desirable plants also, so be careful where you use it.
- **Burnout** is made from clove oil, vinegar and lemon juice and its mechanism of action is similar to vinegar. This can work well on driveways or sidewalks – places where the weed is isolated
- **Corn Gluten** is a weed suppressor and works against emerging weeds. It is not effective for established weeds.

Still need a little help?

www.laurensgardenservice.com



The team at Lauren's Garden Service can help you get your weeds under control. We also offer seasonal, monthly or weekly maintenance packages.

Just give us a call at **410-461-2535** to set up a consultation, or fill out our contact form online.