

WEEDING THE VEGETABLE GARDEN

In the vegetable garden a WEED is any plant that you did not intentionally sow. Weeds are introduced into a raised garden bed by soils, amendments, mulches, other plant materials, wind, animals or poor quality vegetable seeds. Noxious weeds are species legally declared a threat to natural environments and agriculture.

Problems Caused by Weeds

- Weeds compete with desirable plants for water, nutrients, space and light.
- Weeds may act as host or shelter for insects and/or diseases.
- A seed bank can build up if weeds are allowed to drop seeds. Weed seeds can remain viable for years.
- Weeds are capable of quick reproduction.

Prevention = Best Control

- Plant certified weed-free seed
- Use certified weed-free amendments and mulches
- Use mulch where appropriate
- Maintain healthy, competitive plants
- Water and fertilize appropriately

Control Methods

- Pre-sprout weeds in the spring. Moisten soil and cover with clear plastic or cover beds with plastic in the fall.
- Minimize disturbance to the soil once the seed bed is prepared.
- Space plants to shade soil. One benefit of block planting.
- Use mulch where appropriate.
- Be able to differentiate between a vegetable seedling and a weed.
- Hand pull weeds or use small hand tools in the raised bed.
- Weed when the soil is moist (best for getting the full root system).
- Weed early and often. Weeds are easier to remove when small.
- Remove weeds before they produce seeds.
- Cultivate shallowly so as not to bring up more weed seeds.
- Eliminate weeds growing in the vicinity of the garden.
- Do not use herbicides in a vegetable garden (there are none for edible crops).