

A WEED-FREE GARDEN

Some weeds have pretty flowers, but to a gardener, they're all a pain in the grass! To stop 'em dead in their tracks, follow these tips; you'll be winning the war of the weeds in no time at all!

Tip #1 The bigger your garden, the more weeds you'll have. This may seem obvious, but many people cultivate a space that's too large to maintain. Keep your garden a manageable size, and you won't have so many weeds to worry about.

Tip #2 Start plants indoors, and transplant them later in the season. This way, your seedlings won't have to compete with weeds, and once they're transplanted, they will shade out weeds for you.

Tip #3 Weeds crop up wherever there's an empty space in the soil. In other words, the more seeds you sow, the less space you'll leave for weeds.

Tip #4 Don't plant too soon. In cold soil, warm-natured plants struggle to grow, and are often overtaken by weeds. So wait until you're sure all danger of frost is past before planting. Also, don't plant everything on the same day. If you do, you'll have lots and lots of weeds to pull all at once.

Tip #5 Learn how certain plants affect weeds. For example, large leafed vegetables, like lettuce and squash, kill weeds by depriving them of sunlight. Tall plants, like corn and pole beans, stand a better chance of beating weeds than smaller ones. Experiment, and let your plants do the weeding for you.

Tip #6 The first month after planting is a critical time for weeding. During this time, weeds are more likely to interfere with plant growth. So, weed often during the first four weeks to give your seedlings a fighting chance. As a bonus, you won't have as much weeding work to do later in the season.

Tip #7 Watch the weather. The best time to *pull* weeds is when the soil is moist. The weeds are easier to tug out, and you're less likely to disturb surrounding plants. On the other hand, *hoeing* should be done when the soil is dry, so that once the weeds are dislodged, they'll be cut off from their water supply and die.

