

Weeds

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With the recent warming trend, it seems that weeds are coming up faster than you can pick them. But before you go out and buy the first weed killer you can find, know that most weed killers can have long-term effects on your soil and adjacent shrubs and trees. And some of them aren't safe for use around children and pets.

As opposed to using a lot of chemicals, my first line of defense against weeds is to remove them by hand or with the help of a hula hoe. It's a tool that cuts weeds at their roots (and usually kills them).

In addition to removing weeds by hand, I also add 4 to 6 inches of native tree trimming mulch or 2 to 4 inches of gravel around my plants. This application is generally thick enough to block sunlight from penetrating the soil and stops weeds in their tracks. An added bonus is that mulch protects the earth from eroding.

It's important to remove weeds before they produce seed heads, otherwise you'll weeds for years to come. But if you can't get to them in time and your weeds are reproducing, try spraying them with products like Garden-Ville Weed Killer or Bioganic Weed and Grass Killer. Both products are environmentally friendly.

For a natural pre-emergent, try WOW. It kills weed seeds before they germinate, and is made from a cornmeal byproduct.

Remember: When using pre-emergent's, you will kill all seeds, including vegetables and flowers, so be choosy about where you spread it.

Solarizing the soil is another option if you have a couple of days to wait for the weeds to die. Just take a piece of black plastic and cover the weeds and seal the plastic by holding the sides down with heavy rocks or bricks. It takes a day or two to work in the summer here and a little longer when the weather is cooler. You can remove the plastic when the weeds have shriveled up and dried. It's a very effective, inexpensive, easy and safe way to kill weeds. Of course only do this in areas that have stand alone weeds, not in grass areas or any other plant life that you don't want to kill.