****

**Quick Reference Pros & Cons to tackling weeds**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Method | Pros | Cons |
| Mulches | Thickly layered newspaper | FreeRecycles a waste productEasily availableEasy to transportAdds organic matter to the soil | Breaks down quicklyCan look unsightly |
| Cardboard | As for newspaper, but lasts longer |  |
| Black plastic weed fabric/ woven landscape fabric | Reusable year on yearEasy to use & storeCan be covered with other materials and prevents them being incorporated into the soil (good for permanent paths) | Expensive (in large areas)Adds to the plastic problemFrayed edges can jam up strimmers |
| Compost | Made on the plot from kitchen waste and plot clippings, this provides a fabulous recycled productAdds organic matter to the soil | Takes time to produce from scratchCost to buy |
| Manure | Recycles a waste productAdds organic matter to the soil | Cost to buyDifficult to find organic suppliersMay not be acceptable for some due to animal management |
| Shredded bark, Sawdust, Woodchips | Free (some sites)Recycles a waste productLasts a long timeLooks attractive | Cost to buyIf incorporated into soil, material can ‘steal’ nitrogen through decomposition process |
| Straw, Hay, Grass clippings, Leaves, Comfrey | Recycles a waste productAdds organic matter to the soil | Difficult to keep in placeCan harbour pests |
| Manual | Hand Weeding | Lo-technology, only need a hand forkCan tackle perennial problems individuallyMost effective at long term solution | Labour intensive |
| Hand Hoeing | Good for tackling annual weeds | Risk of breaking up roots of pernicious weeds |
| Rotovating | Effective at deeply turning compacted soil | Cost to hireNoisy, petrol machineBreaks up roots of pernicious weeds |
| Strimming / Mowing | Useful for keeping grass paths under controlCan help clear a very overgrown space | Cost to buy/ hirePetrol versions noisy, petrol |
| Thermal | Flame gun | Effective at spot treating perennial weeds | Cost to hireNoisy, petrol machine |
| Boiling water | Effective at spot treating perennial weeds | Need a method to heat water on site (camping stove) |
| Growing Cover | Green Manures | Adds organic matter and / or nitrogenProvides natural environment for microorganismsOften attract beneficial insectsLooks attractive | Small costGermination issues |
| Crops | Provides natural environment for microorganismsProduces interesting food | Small costMore labour |

Top tips for keeping the plot mostly weed free:

* Focus on cultivating ONE bed at a time. There is no need to dig over the whole plot! It is easy to get excited with plans for dozens of different beds, but try and be realistic about how much time you have to devote to the plot. You can easily grown more than one type of vegetable in the same bed; in fact this is a useful strategy to promote diversity and prevent disease for your crops.
* Don’t do too much in one go. If you spend an entire day trying to tackle weeds, you will come away feeling disheartened and sore! Take on a small area and enjoy it. Why not invite friends along for some added muscle if you’re impatient to clear more space.
* Address perennial problems as soon as you see them. Pulling up a dandelion seedling is much easier than digging out a well-rooted mature plant.
* Where you have perennial or pernicious plants growing through paving or other hard standing areas, you can utilise heat to help you. Boiling water poured on the offending weed
* Once you’ve cleared a space, keep it clear. That way you only have to graft once. Mulch, cover, plant, whatever method suits you.
* Learn to love your weeds. Keep an area for wildlife – they will help pollinate your crops and help you fight off plant pests. Many plants we consider weeds are also delicious to eat: nettle, dandelion, chickweed, purslane, so don’t dismiss them entirely.
* Find what works for you. Chat with other gardeners and of course, ask us at BHOGG!