

Definition of 'a weed'

by Bill Hansen

Since weeding seems to take up so much of the gardener's time, you would think there would be much more written on the subject. Perhaps the reason is, that if ignored, people feel the weeds might go away. Which of course they won't. A few years ago, when I was attending the Master Gardener program, the class was asked to define a weed. Although it sounds easy, we had a very difficult time with the assignment. Finally, our instructor — who had obviously been through this drill before — gave us the best definition I have ever heard: "A weed is any plant growing where you don't want it to." Sort of like saying, "One man's junk is another man's treasure."

No matter how hard the gardener struggles, I have a hunch that the weed will win the final battle. About the best we can hope for is to hold them at bay while we use their territory to grow our crops.

Frequent cultivation, hoeing and mulching will easily handle most of your weed problems, especially those that grow from seeds. Those that stem from established root systems are the most difficult to deal with. They usually require hand pulling, a tedious, backbreaking chore. As you pull them, try to get as much of the root system as you can. This will slow them down and give your vegetables a chance to dominate. Your garden will do quite well this way, as even weeds need leaves to support growth.

In our garden, it is still too early to mulch with anything but black plastic. Organic mulches are used mainly to help retain moisture, which obviously we don't need right now. Mulches also provide a safe place for

slugs, which we never need.

Slugs seem to be especially bothersome this year. Since they feed mostly at night, they seek some safe, cool place to hide during the heat of the day. You can eliminate many of them by placing old boards (or some other flat object) in the garden for them to crawl under. Then, during the day, turn the boards over and either toss them into a bucket of salty water or pound the little devils flat with your hoe or shovel. If you can't get ahead of them this way, you may need to resort to slug bait. Since most of the companies that market slug bait have now switched from pellets to a powdery meal, there is little or no danger to birds or pets. But, to be cautious, if you decide to use bait, you can place it under something that will prevent birds or animals from getting to it. I often use rhubarb leaves for this purpose.

If your beans need cultivating now, don't work in them when the leaves are wet. Handling wet bean plants will encourage a fungus called "rust" which, while not fatal, will severely retard your crop. Aphids, which can be especially bothersome about this time of year, can be controlled by blasting them off plants with your garden hose. This trick will work very well on roses too, if you catch them in time.

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June 8	6:15	Vernonia vs. Artistic Salon
June 10	6:15	Vernonia vs. Fryes
June 15	6:15	Vernonia vs. Holub
June 23	6:15	Vernonia vs. Telefun
June 29	6:15	Vernonia vs. Loy-Dene
July 1	6:15	Vernonia vs. Hillsboro Toyota
July 7	7:30	Vernonia vs. Scott Farms
July 8	7:30	Vernonia vs. Artistic Salon
July 9	7:30 *	Vernonia vs. Fryes
July 14	7:30	Vernonia vs. Holub
July 21	7:30	Vernonia vs. Telefun
July 23	7:30 *	Vernonia vs. Loy-Dene
July 29	7:30	Vernonia vs. Hillsboro Toyota
July 30	6:15 *	Vernonia vs. Scott Farms

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