



# Persistence key to controlling garden weeds



Puncture vine bur.

Photo contributed by Ed Peachey

## OSU scientist shares tips for spring

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**  
East Oregonian

Managing weeds can be an arduous task for local gardeners, from hand-pulling prickly thistle to spraying for bright yellow dandelions.

But Judit Barroso, a weed scientist for Oregon State University, says persistence is required to keep the plants from taking over lawns and gardens.

"You cannot spend one Saturday pulling weeds, and that's it for the season," Barroso said.

For smaller gardens, Barroso recommends weeding at least twice per month, which should be enough to keep pesky perennials such as dandelions and bindweed at bay.

Now is also a good time to start treating winter annuals before they spring to life, Barroso said. Examples of winter annual weeds include chickweed, prickly lettuce and yellow star-thistle. Summer annuals, such as crabgrass and puncture vine, will not appear until later in the summer.

At any rate, Barroso said gardeners should be on the lookout and not wait until after the weeds have begun flowering.

"If you wait until they bloom, it is kind of late," she said.

Barroso, who works for the Columbia Basin Agricultural Research and Extension Center north of Pendleton, taught a class on weed control and identification for the OSU Master Gardener Program earlier this year. In her presentation, she said there are roughly 250,000 species of plants worldwide, of which about 8,000 behave as weeds.

Weeds are a problem



Field bindweed.

Photo contributed by Ed Peachey

because they rob soil nutrients and water from crops, which reduces yield and quality. Some can also be toxic to humans or animals.

There are a number of ways to control weeds using chemicals or manual labor. When it comes to pulling or digging up weeds, Barroso said to pay attention to the type of plant — perennials tend to have a deeper root system, and merely cutting off the top of the weed will not do.

"(Gardeners) have to remove as much of the root system as they can," she said.

Common weed killers such as Roundup are mostly safe to use, though Barroso said it is always a good idea to read the label first and follow all instructions.

Otherwise, gardeners may consider other tools to prevent weeds from growing. In particular, Barroso recommends using a drip line as opposed to a sprinkler to ensure water goes to the crop, and not to weeds.

"Watering with a hose, you are watering both the crop and weeds," she said. "The idea is to put water just in your crop."

Another option after harvest

is to cover the garden bed with a clear plastic tarp, which will catch rays from the sun and heat up the soil. This process, known as soil solarization, will not only kill weeds, but other soil-borne pathogens that can harm crops.

"The idea is to kill the weed seeds by increasing temperature," Barroso said.

By learning the species of weeds in your garden first, Barroso said gardeners can come up with an effective long-term plan moving forward.

"They key is persistence," she said.



Prickly lettuce.

Photo contributed by Ed Peachey



Chickweed seedling.

Photo contributed by Ed Peachey

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