



# Keeping Weeds in Check

Most every plant has its own merits. What constitutes one community gardener's prized plant might be another gardener's idea of a weed. Technically, a weed is simply any plant that is growing out of place. (A stand of purple coneflower plants might be perfectly lovely on its own, for example, but, if coneflowers keep popping up in the middle of what was supposed to be your strawberry patch, you might now think of purple coneflower as a weed!)

Unless you had the same community garden plot last year, you might not know just what to expect in the way of weeds for this growing season. If your plot was regularly weeded—and the weeds were removed well before they had time to set seed heads—you might have fewer weeds overall. But any soil amendments previously used—especially compost of manure which may have contained viable weed seeds—also can affect your weed burden.

## Best Practices for Weed Prevention and Control

**Visit Regularly**—As other summer activities pile up, it's easy to let the garden slip your mind, but making regular visits to your plot to check for problems—and to pull weeds while they're still small!—can make a big difference.

**Cover with Cardboard**—You can layer large, flat sheets of cardboard in unplanted areas of your garden, in order to suppress weeds. Weigh the cardboard down with organic compost or lots of decaying leaves. Keep in mind that, although this tactic cuts down on the need to weed, you'll still need to do some weeding, since birds and other animals may introduce weed seeds into your garden and the compost you use could also contain some weed seeds.

**Get the Roots**—Use a shovel or hand trowel to dig any weeds out fully by their roots, and you'll be much less likely to encounter them again. If, instead, you simply cut or break off weeds at the soil line, they'll be back. Some weeds, like thistle and dandelions, have extremely long taproots which grow deep underground. The more of these root systems you can remove, the better off you'll be.

**Toss Out Weeds with Seed Heads**—If you've removed mature weeds with seed heads, carefully place these in a bag and dispose of them well outside of the garden and away from compost bins. Seed-bearing weeds should not be placed in any of the community garden compost bins, because our compost piles may not always get hot enough to render weed seeds no longer viable.

**Watch for Invasive Plants**—As you monitor the health of your garden plot, keep an eye out of invasive weeds like mint, artemisia (mugwort), and thistle. These can quickly spread to other parts of the community garden, so, if you see these in or around your plot, let the Community Garden Supervisor know.

**Avoid Woody-Stemmed Shrubs, Trees, etc.**—In addition to making sure you keep weeds under control, remember that, except in limited cases as determined by the Garden Coordinator, woody-stemmed shrubs, woody perennials, and trees are not allowed in the community gardens. When in doubt, consult your Community Garden Agreement or ask the Community Garden Supervisor before you plant.

# Common Weeds

Here are some of the most common weeds you may encounter in the garden—and reminders for disposal of the really invasive plants. **Bag up and throw away. Do not place in community garden compost bins.**

## Mugwort

*Artemisia vulgaris*

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## Mint

*Mint*

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## Thistle

*Cirsium vulgare*—*Scotch thistle*

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## Dandelion

*Taraxacum officinale*

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## Burdock

*Arctium lappa*

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## Yellow Dock

*Rumex crispus*

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## Creeping Charlie

*Glechoma hederacea*—*Creeping Charlie*

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**Need some extra advice or have questions about your responsibilities as a community gardener?  
Contact the Community Garden Supervisor at [communitygardens@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:communitygardens@bloomington.in.gov).**