Weeding Naturally

How to beat weeds – naturally. Weeding doesn’t have to be the most time consuming garden task. Follow these tips and outsmart those clever but pesky plants without using any harmful poisons. Weeds do tell us important information about the soil they are growing in. Before you pull them all out, listen to what your weeds are telling you.

**Buttercup** is a very invasive weed that loves acidic, poorly drained, nutrient poor soils. However, it will also grow just about anywhere, as long as the soil is acidic. Make sure to add lime to your garden in the early spring to raise the pH and help your plants outgrow buttercup.

**Chickweed** is edible! Chickweed likes fertile pH neutral soils (the same as most vegetables), but is easy to pull out, and can be a great addition to salads in early spring, when nothing else is growing!

**Dandelion** often can survive in heavy, clay soils that are acidic. Improving soil quality, applying lime appropriately, and weeding these out before they flower will easily control dandelions. Also – they are incredible healthy as a food and every part of the plant is edible! They also are an important spring food for bees, so make sure to let a few stick around!

**Morning Glory (Bindweed)** is one of the most noxious weeds in North America! It can grow anywhere, and especially thrives in compacted, poorly draining soils. Pay close attention and pull out all new shoots on a regular basis. Morning glory can grow very quickly and strangle a plant in no time.

**Main Lessons**
1. Improve soil drainage by adding compost and mulching over winter.
2. Lime once every two or three years to keep soil from being too acidic.
3. Keep an eye on the worst weeds; don’t worry too much about the friendly ones!

**Timing** - In the Pacific Northwest, most of our weedy species start growing much earlier than our vegetables do. By weeding in January and February, especially grasses and buttercup, you can more easily control them in your garden.

**Control Weed Seeds**
Bare garden soil is a storehouse of weed seeds that have blown from surrounding sources. Every time you dig out mature weeds, you turn over the soil and expose new seeds to water and sunlight, causing them to sprout a whole new crop of weeds. Stop this cycle by covering the soil around your plant after you weed. This will stop weed seeds from sprouting.

Also, in the summer when your garden veggies are bigger and have deeper roots, allowing the top 1 or 2 cm of soil to dry out between watering will kill shallow rooted weeds.