

# Gardening Basics

## Weed Control without Chemicals

Weed control is the "ugly" part of gardening. We have a few tips that can help.

### Recommendations

- You may have to add a weed barrier, such as cardboard, each season. Weeds are determined little pests and will overwinter in your soil only to show up again next year.
- Prepare a lasagna garden bed this fall where you plan to grow vegetables in the spring. This sheet composting method includes layers of organic materials and compostable weed blocks such as cardboard or newspaper to enrich your soil without tilling.
- Mulch, mulch, mulch!!! After putting cardboard down, you can put soil on top of that, then apply a 3 - 4" layer of mulch. This makes a huge difference in tamping down weeds. It has the corollary benefits of holding moisture in the soil and moderating its temperature. Hardwood, cedar, cypress, and pine straw mulches are all good options, according to Texas A&M AgriLife extension. You may want to use wood chips from a combination of hardwood and cedar trees. Contact tree service(s) to see if they will drop off their chipped tree trimmings to use as mulch.
- Apply a pre-emergence herbicide rated for vegetable plants. A pre-emergence herbicide is designed to prevent weed seeds from sprouting. An organic example is corn gluten meal which also contains 10% nitrogen which acts as a fertilizer. Another example rated for vegetables is products containing trifluralin. Both may require repeated applications to achieve weed control over the growing season. Always read the entire product label and carefully follow the instructions and safety precautions.
- Consider planting a cool-season cover crop such as buckwheat or winter rye this fall to enrich the soil and keep cool-season weeds at bay.
- Unfortunately, even with using a weed barrier and mulch, you'll still have a few weeds pop up during the growing season. Monitor your beds daily, and dig out any new weed growth as they pop up. Do your best not to let the weeds flower and go to seed. You may need to discard the weed plant material you remove rather than compost it, particularly if you plan to use the compost in your beds. Weed seeds seem to be able to survive even the hottest compost pile! Chickens love eating the weeds pulled out of beds.



*Lasagna gardening, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0, Denton County MGA*

## Sources & Resources

"Mulching"; Texas A&M AgriLife Extension; <https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/library/gardening/mulching/>

"Vegetable Resources; Chapter VIII: Weed Management; Texas A&M AgriLife Extension; <https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/vegetable/guides/texas-vegetable-growers-handbook/chapter-viii-weed-management/>

"Gardening & Landscaping, How to Grow Vegetables"; Texas A&M AgriLife Extension; <https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/browse/featured-solutions/gardening-landscaping/>

"Get an Early Start on Vegetable Weed Garden Control"; Michigan State University Extension; [https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/get\\_an\\_early\\_start\\_on\\_vegetable\\_garden\\_weed\\_control](https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/get_an_early_start_on_vegetable_garden_weed_control)

"Using Cover Crops and Green Manures in the Home Vegetable Garden", Wisconsin Horticulture Division of Extension; <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/using-cover-crops-and-green-manures-home-vegetable-garden/>

"Fall Ground Preparation"; Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, East Texas Gardening; <https://easttexasgardening.tamu.edu/2014/07/28/fall-ground-preparation/>