



# Weed Control Basics

Weeds are the bane of every home landscape! Becoming weed-free may be impossible but there IS a “recipe” that can reduce weeds by 80% or more.

Be sure not to skip any step or ingredient! Like any recipe, each part is critical to success.

## 1 Use Mulch

Mulch is one of your best allies in the garden. Spreading a 3” layer of mulch can help keep weeds down and soil moisture in. The main products used for this are bark chips, compost, and gravel—each with its best application. Bark mulch takes longer to break down into the soil and stays looking good for a long time. Compost supplies nutrients to the soil as it breaks down and it can be free if you make your own. Gravel is a little more expensive initially but rarely needs to be reapplied.

## 2 Stay Away from Weed Barrier Fabric

Landscape fabric seems like a great idea when you first install it but it becomes something you will regret later. It ends up sucking the life right out of your soil. Your soil is home to countless micro-organisms that break down organic matter so it can be used by your plants. If you use landscape fabric there is no way for those organisms to break down the bark mulch, compost, and leaves that will feed your plants.

Most people install landscape fabric to keep the weeds down. It does this for a little while but weeds end up growing right on top of it anyway. Plus, if you ever get behind on your maintenance those weeds become very hard to pull out with their roots now entangled in the fabric.

## 3 Avoid Soil Compaction/Disruption

Soil compaction from foot traffic makes it hard for your ornamental plants to grow but makes a great living environment for certain types of weeds. It’s best to avoid walking in your planter beds when possible. If there is an area that you know you will be moving through frequently make a path out of concrete, stepping stones, or gravel in that area.

Once your planter beds are installed with plants, drip irrigation, and mulch avoid tilling in those areas. When you till the ground you are waking up weeds seeds that have been waiting for air and sunlight to germinate.



without  
recipe

Spring Weed  
Growth



Spring Weed  
Growth

with  
recipe

## 4 Water with Drip Irrigation

Watering the plants that you want to keep and not the weeds is one of the best ways to keep weeds under control. Your plants absorb water through their roots, not the leaves, so applying water to the soil with drip irrigation just makes sense for the plants and conserves water too by limiting loss of water to evaporation or wind.

## 5 Use Herbicides as a Last Resort

If you have to apply large amounts of Glyphosate (Roundup, Killzall, etc.) then you are usually missing on one of the previous four steps to the recipe. Glyphosate should be used in spot applications to control and kill weeds while they are small, and before they go to seed. You can also choose to hand pull weeds instead of spraying them.

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