

## Controlling Weeds

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The summer weeds are replacing the winter weeds.

One of the most noticeable and aggressive weeds is Bermuda grass. If you have flower or vegetable gardens in full sun the plant is moving in by stolons( above ground) and rhizomes( below ground) to take advantage of the fertilized soil in the gardens. Bermuda grass is difficult to pull by hand but in situations where food crops are not involved a contact herbicide specific for grass can be sprayed on the Bermuda grass foliage. Products such as "Over-the Top", "Grass-Be Gone", "Fusilade", "Vantage", and "Poast" can be sprayed in the flower garden, tree circles, and shrub border to kill the Bermuda grass without hurting the non-grass species. Sprayed on actively growing foliage, the active ingredients in the products translocate to the roots of the Bermuda grass and kill the whole plant.

If you pull Bermuda grass from the garden collect all the parts of the plant that are pulled. A small piece of Bermuda grass that is pulled out of the garden but left in contact with the soil will quickly resurrect a new plant. Put the pulled Bermuda grass parts in the middle of an active compost pile so they decompose!

The labels do not allow spraying the products in planted vegetable gardens but they can be used on the grass at the edge of the garden which is invading the garden. Follow label instructions.

There are a long list of woody vines and weed trees that grow in fence lines, shrub borders, and even in containers. The trees such as hackberry, mulberry, and chinaberry are spread by birds that feed on their berries. Vines such as cat's claw, Smilax, and coral vine spread through fast growing stolons and rhizomes. Our usual control mechanism is to cut them off at ground level with pruners 3 or 4 times over a summer because they grow back from the roots. There is now a product available, "Stump and Vine Killer" that offers the option of brushing a small amount of herbicide on the fresh cut with the result that it is translocated to the roots and kills the whole plant. It is hard to believe that a small quantity of the active ingredient placed on the cut stem will travel through the vascular system to kill the top and roots, but it works very well.

Applying "Stump and Vine Killer" does slow down your pruning rounds but it also reduces the necessity of recutting the same woody weeds over and over. The brush applicator supplied with the herbicide allows the product be safely used in situations as sensitive to contact herbicides as rose beds!

The easiest way to control sand burs is to apply a pre-emergent such as "Amaze", "Dimension", or "Crabgrass Preventer" to the lawn about March 1 and then again about June 15, but if you missed the March 1 application you probably already have sand burs growing and developing their burs.

If you learn what the sand bur plants look like (find one with burs as an example) you can pop them out of the ground with a spade. They have a shallow root system. Throw them in the compost if they don't have burs formed yet, or in the garbage if the burs are evident. Another tactic that is effective is to identify and spray growing sand burs with one of the "Image" products labeled for the purpose. This only works to prevent the burs if the "Image" is sprayed on the plant before burs have begun their development.

“Image” is also the herbicide of choice for controlling nutshedge. There is not an immediate kill but the sprayed plants quit growing and eventually die.