MitrePlan #54

Destroy common garden weeds

- An easy-to-follow guide to achieving a perfect result.
- Outlines all the tools you will need for the job.
- Includes a materials checklist.

PLEASE NOTE:
Before starting this project or buying any materials, it is worth your time to read all steps thoroughly first to be sure you understand what is required.

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**Chemical Methods**

Weedkillers (herbicides) can make life a lot easier in the garden. But treat them with respect – perhaps using only as a last resort depending on how severe the infestation is, the types of weeds and plants present, and the area to be covered.

**Total Weedkillers:** These must be used with great care. Choose a day when there is little or no wind to cause drift onto your cultivated plants and killing them, too. In area where long term control is required, such as along fences, pathways, driveways and tennis courts, use a once-a-year-path weeder like those produced by Yates and Hortico. They kill most weeds and prevent weed seeds from germinating. But as the name implies, they last in the soil for up to 12 months. So be sure not to use where there’s a chance of the herbicide running on to lawn or garden beds. In areas where weed killing is required but the ground is to be cultivated and planted up shortly afterwards, Mitre 10 Glyphosate is recommended. This herbicide has no residual effect on the soil and the area treated can be used within 2–3 weeks.

**Selective Weedkillers:** These kill only the weeds they are made to eradicate, and there’s a range of them for lawns depending on the problem. For example of only broad leaf weeds (the Dicots as mentioned earlier) while leaving grass (Monocots) to flourish. As with weedkillers, be careful of spray drift on to cultivated plants. And do not use grass clippings from the treated area for mulch or as feed for livestock. Bindii is a common problem in lawns in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia and spraying with Yates Bindii & Clover Killer when actively growing can control it.

Other selective herbicides are available to control Paspalum, Crab grass, Mullumbimby, Couch, Winter grass, and Carpet grass. As defined earlier, a weed is a plant growing out of place. And in lawns, this can be any grass different to the chosen lawn grass. For example, Crab grass infestation in a lawn of Queensland Blue Couch – this is best controlled with spot spraying. Yates Antipas will control Paspalum, Crab grass, Summer grass, and Mullumbimby Couch in lawns of Bent grass, Fescue and Couch (this herbicide may not be available in all states).

Of course, the best way to prevent weeds invading your lawn is to have a regular program of feeding, watering and mowing (refer to MitrePlan #51, “Caring for established lawns”).

**Weed’em out for a clean, healthy garden – with a little help from Mitre 10.**

The trouble with unwanted weeds is that their growth generally occurs at the same time as those plants you do want, robbing them of space, light, moisture and nutrients. They’re also a good hiding place for pests and diseases and can make your garden look unattractive.

But weeds mean different things to different people. A daisy growing in a lawn is attractive to some but not to others. It’s the same for clover and other plants including the Lantana camara which is a cultivated plant in Victoria but a noxious weed in NSW and Queensland.

Weeds are generally defined as a plant (any plant) considered out of its rightful place. For example, grass in a lawn is desirable, but it is a weed in a garden bed. And in this MitrePlan, we help you spot and identify those plants that shouldn’t be there, and tell you the best means of controlling them for a cleaner, healthier garden.

**Step 1: Know the enemy**

Before you can successfully control or eradicate weeds, it is important to understand their characteristics and growth habits. Generally, all weeds have some of these basic traits:

- vigorous and persistent growth, allowing them to establish themselves quickly and often grow faster than plants already there;
- difficulty in eradication;
- propagate easily from roots left lying on the ground;
- a short life cycle of some weeds means seed is produced quickly;
- produce large quantities of seed;
- spread seed quickly through special dispersal methods such as burrs;
- seeds can remain dormant in the soil for many years.

**Weed Groups**

Like all plants, weeds fall into two main groups. You need to know this if you are planning to use a chemical (herbicide) to control a particular type of weed.

**Monocots** – plants producing one seed leaf when they germinate. The leaf is long and narrow, and has parallel veins, eg. grass.

**Dicots** – plants producing two leaves on germinating. Leaves are broad and have a network of veins, eg. clover.

**Growth Habits**

You should also know whether weeds grow annually, biennially or perennially – this can determine your method of controlling them, either by chemical or mechanical means.

Annuals complete their cycle in one year or less and may have several generations in that year. Aim to destroy them before they produce seed. Some examples are Cape Weed, Winter Grass, Stinging Nettle, Chickweed, Bindii and Petitig Surf.

Biennials have two year cycles, flowering and producing seed in the second year. They should be destroyed in their first season. Examples include Fennel, Patterson’s Curse, and Evening, Blackberries, and Carpet Grass are prime examples.

**Step 2: Weed control**

Most weeds in the home garden can be effectively controlled with good garden practices such as:

- removing weeds as soon as they appear;
- mulching where possible to suppress weed growth;
- ensuring soil introduced is free of invasive weeds;
- removing annual weeds before they seed;
- removing perennial weeds before they seed and ensuring you get their roots as well.

**Hand weeding:** Probably still the best method in the home garden or for small areas.

**Mechanical Weeding:** Using a garden fork, cultivator or Dutch hoe to remove weeds is the most practical and sensible method in many cases. The secret is to spend just a few minutes a day...
when the weeds are small and easy to remove rather than putting it off until the problem gets out of hand. Then it becomes a back-breaking task – and an unnecessary one – spoiling your pleasure of gardening.

**Mowing:** Regular mowing of lawns prevent taller weeds from flowering and seeding.

**Mulching:** Smothers weed seedling before they become a problem and has the added benefits of keeping the soil moist and cool in summer.

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**Common Weeds**

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<td><strong>Common Lawn Weeds:</strong></td>
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<td>Bindi (Soliva pterosperma)</td>
<td>Bindi is an annual and clover is a perennial. Particularly invasive of lawns. Control with “Bindi &amp; Clover Killer”.</td>
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<td>Black Nightshade</td>
<td>(Solanum nigrum)</td>
<td>Annual all states. Spray anytime it is actively growing with “Roundup” or “Yates Broadleaf Weed Killer”. Poisonous berries.</td>
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<td>Ribwort Plantain</td>
<td>(Plantago lanceolata)</td>
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<td>Clover (Trifolium repens)</td>
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<td><strong>Annual Grasses:</strong></td>
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<td>Veldt grass</td>
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<td>(Ehrharta-sps)</td>
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<td><strong>Perennial Creeping Grasses:</strong></td>
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<td>Paspalum</td>
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<td>(Paspalum-digatum)</td>
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<td>Kikuyu</td>
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<td>(Pennisetum-clandestinum)</td>
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<td>Buffalo Grass</td>
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<td>(Stenataphrum Seandatum)</td>
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<td><strong>Grasses in wet areas:</strong></td>
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<td>Mullumbimby couch</td>
<td>Perennial grasses with invasive roots and tough leaves. In gardens, hand weed. Where severe use Paspalum Killer, Roundup or Zero. On pathways use Once A Year Pathweeder.</td>
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<td>Oxalis</td>
<td>(Sour Sob)</td>
<td>Perennial all states. Spray from July to October with “Bindi &amp; Clover Lawn Weeder”; or “Roundup”.</td>
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<td>Creeping Buttercup</td>
<td>(Ranunculus repens and many species)</td>
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<td>Umbrella Sedge</td>
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<td>Nut grass (Cyperus-sps)</td>
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<td><strong>Bracken:</strong></td>
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<td>(Pieridium esculentum)</td>
<td>Perennial all states. Slash in Spring to early summer. From February to April with “Roundup”.</td>
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<td>Petty Spurge</td>
<td>(Euphorbia peplus)</td>
<td>Annual all states. Spray with “Broadleaf Weed Killer” or “Roundup”. Hand weed if light infestation.</td>
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<td>Mallow</td>
<td>(Malva spp.)</td>
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<td><strong>Cape Weed:</strong></td>
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<td>(Arctotheca-calendula)</td>
<td>Annual all states. Spray any time if actively growing with “Bindi &amp; Clover Killer” or “Yates Broadleaf Weed Killer”. Hand weed if light infestation.</td>
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<td>Vinca major</td>
<td>(Periwinkle)</td>
<td>A common garden escape into the wild. This is a bad weed for the environment. Control by hand weeding. Where necessary spray with Roundup or Tree and Blackberry Killer.</td>
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<td>Scotch Thistle</td>
<td>Soldier Thistle</td>
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**Step 3: Using herbicides**

First, read the instructions on the container and follow them carefully. Herbicides are poisonous so familiarise yourself with first aid directions, too. Mix only according to the directions and apply with a sprayer or watering can. Avoid spraying on windy days where spray mist could drift onto cultivated plants. It could also blow onto you, so wear appropriate protective clothing. After use, thoroughly wash out the sprayer or watering can. Wash yourself thoroughly, too, particularly hands, arms and face. Finally store chemicals in a safe place, out of reach of children, and dispose of empty herbicide containers according to label instructions.
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MIGHTY HELPFUL HINTS TO MAKE THE JOB EASIER

- Try to dig the weeds out first rather than use chemical sprays.
- If the weeds have lots of runners or suckers don’t use a rotary hoe until the weeds are dead.
- Use one of the great hand tools available for removing flat weeds in your lawn.
- Lawn weeder feeders are the best way to improve lawn growth and get rid of the weeds at the same time.
- Check the labels on any chemical for the safety directions.
- Never store chemicals where the children can get to them.
- Always use protective equipment specified by the chemical label.

IMPORTANT: This project planner has been produced to provide basic information and our experienced staff are available to answer any questions you may have. However, this information is provided for use on the understanding that Mitre 10 is not liable for any loss or damage which is suffered or incurred (including but not limited to indirect or consequential loss), for any personal injury or damage to property suffered or sustained as a result of using the information contained in this MitrePlan Project Planner. Mitre 10 advises you to call in a qualified tradesperson, such as an electrician or plumber, where expert services are required, and to independently assess any safety precautions that will need to be followed prior to using the information in this MitrePlan Project Planner.

WARNING: There may be by laws or regulations of councils or other statutory bodies that you must comply with when following this MitrePlan Project Planner.

IMPORTANT: Not all Mitre 10 stores have a garden centre.

Mitre 10 gratefully acknowledges the assistance of:
Mr Robert McMillan, SDH, Cert Public Parks Hort (Scotland), Dip TT, and Mr Ronald Barrow, Dip Hort Sci, Cert Sprinkler Design, DTT, MAIH
in the preparation of this MitrePlan.

Your local MITRE 10 Store is: