

SIMPLE WEED BEATERS

Weed-Free Garden without Dangerous Chemicals

Shot of Vinegar

Tired of hand-pulling broad-leaved weeds from your lawn? Thwart them with a well-placed shot of vinegar. Take care not to splash it on the turf or any plants you'd like to keep, though, because vinegar will kill grassy plants as well. You can even use it to kill crabgrass in the cracks and crevices of sidewalks.

What You'll Need

Pump spray bottle

Vinegar (as close to 10% acidity as possible)

Liquid dish soap (optional)

Directions:

1. Fill the spray bottle with undiluted vinegar or mix 3 parts vinegar to 1 part liquid dish soap, if using.
2. Spray in a narrow stream, dousing the weeds leaves and crown (the area at the base of the plant).
3. Rinse the sprayer well with water, especially if it has metal parts, because vinegar is corrosive.

Note: Carry a section of newspaper or a piece of cardboard with you when you're dousing weeds with vinegar. Use it to shield desirable plants when you need to spray weeds growing near them. And don't get carried away with this weed treatment – repeated applications of vinegar will acidify the soil so that nothing will grow in it.

Plan an Alcohol Attack

Dilute 1 or 2 tablespoons of alcohol in a quart of water for a spray that will dehydrate almost any plant. Because the strength of weeds varies, this formula may require a little experimentation. **5 tablespoons of alcohol in a quart of water will kill poison ivy.**

What You'll Need

1 quart water

1 tablespoon rubbing alcohol (more for tougher weeds)

Pump spray bottle

Directions:

1. Mix water and alcohol in the spray bottle. (Use 1 tablespoon of alcohol for weed seedlings or thin-leaved weeds and 2 tablespoons or more for tougher weeds).
2. Spray weed leaves thoroughly but lightly. (Avoid misting surrounding plants).

Go with Gluten

Want to fertilize your lawn and garden and suppress the growth of new weeds at the same time? Believe it or not, corn gluten meal -- a filler in many dog foods -- does the trick. Available from mail-order garden suppliers, corn gluten prevents the germination of weed seeds, including lamb's-quarter purslane, and dandelion; it doesn't kill existing weeds or other plants.

What You'll Need

Any garden spreader

20 pounds corn gluten meal for every 1,000 square feet

Directions:

1. Fill spreader with dry gluten meal.
2. Apply evenly at about the time weeds start germinating in early spring and again in late summer or early fall. (You can also apply the meal by hand).
3. In a vegetable garden or flowerbed, work the meal into the top 3 inches of soil.
4. Water thoroughly. This starts weed seeds germinating and also activates the gluten.
5. Adjust your fertilizer program. Since corn gluten provides a good dose of nitrogen, be sure to hold off on fertilizing for 2 to 4 weeks.
6. All pre-emergent weed control products work to prevent seed germination for several months after application and should not be applied to lawn areas you wish to be seeded.
7. Reapply corn gluten every year.
8. Be patient. Weed populations will decrease dramatically over 2 to 3 years.

Weeds in Hot Water

Instead of scratching and digging and pulling weeds from sidewalk or driveway cracks, you can use boiling water to eliminate them quickly and safely. Boiling water will kill any plant or seed it touches. So be careful not to splash any of on neighboring garden plants or turf. Though this hot bath will destroy weed seeds that are already in the soil, seeds can be blown or carried in again, so leave the dead weeds in place to mulch the soil and discourage germination of more weed seeds.

Bubble Trouble Soap Spray

A strong dose of soap can kill weeds by burning their leaves and roots. Different weeds require different strengths of soap, so you'll have to experiment to see how tough your weeds are.

What You'll Need

5 tablespoons natural liquid soap

1 quart water

Pump spray bottle

Directions:

1. Mix the soap and water in the spray bottle.
2. Spray the leaves and the root area of weeds during the hottest tie of the day.
3. Check in 24 hours. The weeds should appear burned and nearly dead. If not, double the concentration and spray again.

Win the Weed War with Gin

One application of this special high-proof concoction kills just about any weed, but it's intended for spot use only. Apply it carefully and accurately to single weeds because it can harm grass blades as well.

What You'll Need

1 ounce gin

1 ounce apple cider vinegar

1 tablespoon baby shampoo

1 quart water

Pump spray bottle

Directions:

1. Mix all ingredients in the spray bottle.
2. Adjust the sprayer to a stream setting.
3. Spray on a hot, sunny day, wetting all leaves and dousing the plant.
4. Repeat the dose if the weed is not dead the following day.
5. Reseed bare spots in turf to discourage germination of weed seeds in the soil.