

Freshen Up

Start the season off right by putting some effort into your landscape after winter recedes. Removing dead material and **sharpening bed edges** are key garden refreshers that put eyes at ease, if you do nothing else. Mid-April is generally the best time to **cut back** last year's stems *before* new growth begins and *after* beneficial insects have moved on from their winter homes. Hedge trimmers can make this task less laborious, especially when dealing with grasses and tall plants. Prune spring-flowering shrubs right after they bloom (if needed).

Spring is when many of the first weeds sprout, struggling to get a grip underground. It's during this stage of emergence that **hand-pulling** is easiest and least invasive. (One tenet of smart gardening is to minimize soil disturbance, since most weeds depend on it to germinate.) **Cover** bare areas with plants, seed or mulch immediately afterward to discourage new weeds.



"Signs of care" like clipped hedges, crisp edges and landscape signage lend a sense of neatness to gardens on the wilder side.

WEEDS TO WATCH OUT FOR



Foxtail
Setaria spp.

Applying early spring pre-emergent is the most effective control. Can be controlled with herbicide but it is more difficult. To remove without chemicals, cut seedheads before they mature and dig deeply to reach the long roots.



Honeysuckle
Lonicera maackii

Seedlings can be dug by hand to minimize infestations. Controlled burns also help to curb seedlings but must be repeated several times. Two more effective herbicide options are triclopyr and glyphosate applied to foliage.



Garlic Mustard
Alliaria peiolata

This noxious weed is a biennial with heart-shaped basal leaves year one and white spring flowers year two. Pull or treat with herbicide as soon as it is identified to avoid infestations. (Nebraska Invasives photo)



Russian Olive
Elaeagnus angustifolia

Most problematic in wet areas. Pull or dig seedlings while they are still small. Bark treatment with triclopyr is effective for small trees (<5" diameter). Larger trees need to be manually removed and the stumps treated.



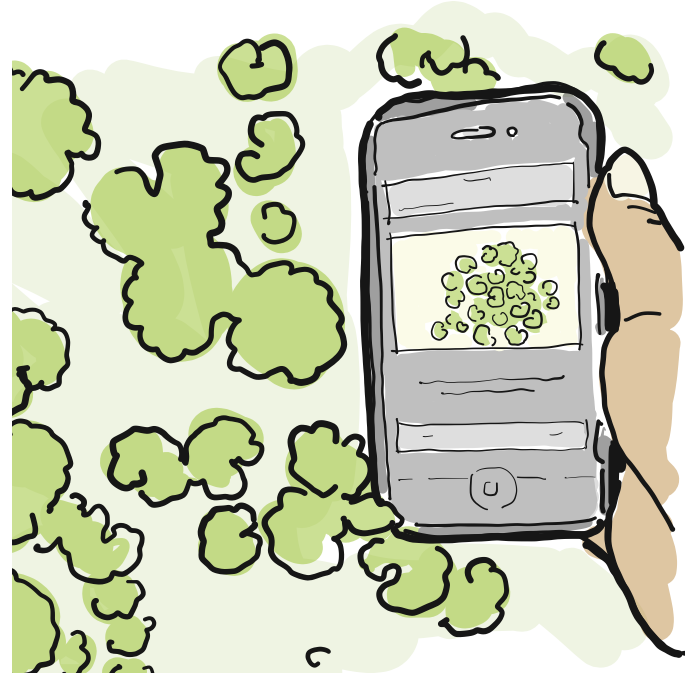
Crabgrass
Digitaria sanguinalis

Dig or pull when soil is slightly damp to get as many roots and rhizomes as possible. Large infestations can be treated with glyphosate but several applications are usually necessary.

Outsmart Weeds

Once your garden greens up, **visit every week or two** to “edit” for a few minutes. Keep in mind that your goal should not be to eliminate every unexpected plant, but to regularly manage the more troublesome ones. As Editor, you can approach new growth—like spreading or reseeding—as something to direct (rather than abhor).

As for weeding, make a plan before diving in. We advise focusing on **highly visible areas** near walkways and curbs, since these are what people see. Start with any tall weeds and cut them off at the base (instead of pulling) to avoid disturbing the soil. Then move on to **woody seedlings**, which can shade out desirables if left unchecked. Pull them by hand if possible (then cover the spot with mulch), or apply a cut-stump treatment. Next, turn to other known bullies/invasives and cut or spray them **before they set seed**. Weeds in flower are easier to identify and more vulnerable when blooming. Pulling is easiest after a rain.



Knowing your weeds gives you the upper hand in management. Take an ID book or phone app with you whenever you go out.

WEEDS TO WATCH OUT FOR



Yellow Sweet Clover
Melilotus indicus

Annual with yellow flowers. Pops up in landscape beds and along walking paths. Pull or spot spray before it seeds. (UC Berkeley photo)



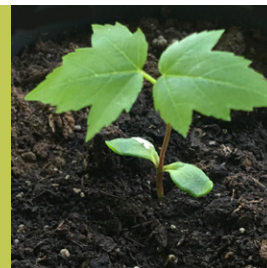
Canada Thistle
Cirsium arvense

1-4' tall perennial that flowers June-October. Seeds and produces new shoots from roots. Taproot makes pulling difficult but repeated mowing reduces infestations. (Inaturalist photo)



Siberian Elm
Ulmus pumila

Seedlings up to 2" diameter can be pulled or dug. Larger trees must be cut and chemically killed. Basal bark spraying, cut-stump treatment and girdling can all be effective but may require multiple treatments.



Maple
Acer spp.

Seeds prolifically in the landscape. Hand-pulling while small is most effective. For larger trees, cut short and treat the fresh stump with herbicide.



Bindweed
Convolvulus arvensis

Morning glory relative with extensive roots. Difficult to eradicate but repeated pulling, digging or herbicide treatments weaken it. Can be a large problem in new landscapes but doesn't compete well in mature plantings.

Cover the Ground

Take some time to check your landscape for bare spots after the heat of summer has passed. These holes will be vulnerable to weeds next year unless they are filled, so take advantage of cool weather to plant. **Replace plants that have died**, and install low groundhuggers like sedges and spring bulbs around plants as **“living” mulch**. Cover any exposed soil with 1-2 inches of grass clippings (in a prairie garden) or wood mulch (in a woodland garden) as extra insurance.

In a native garden, late fall is a good time to control exotic cool season weeds (such as brome or fescue) because they remain green long after native plants go dormant—just **carefully spot-spray** with a foliar herbicide. This tactic works in early spring as well. Native gardens benefit from **ecological treatments** like burning, mowing and grazing, so feel free to experiment. Fall is also a good time to control spring annuals by hoeing or with pre-emergent.



Covering the soil with desirable plants can do more than grass clippings or wood mulch to keep weeds away.

WEEDS TO WATCH OUT FOR



Birdsfoot Trefoil
Lotus corniculatus

Short perennial that flowers all summer. Forms thick mats that choke out other plants. Hand-pulling, repeated cutting and spot spraying are effective. (Weed Alert photo)



Quackgrass
Elymus repens

A cool season grass around 3' tall. Spreads mostly by rhizomes. Repeated pulling and/or chemical treatment will control. (Nebraska Invasives photo)



Tall Fescue
Festuca arundinacea

A perennial grass that is easy to control by digging out clumps. For larger infestations a non-selective herbicide like glyphosate can be effective. Two applications may be needed.



Mulberry
Morus alba

Small mulberry saplings can be dug up, taking care to remove the entire root system or they will readily grow back. Larger mulberry trees can be cut off at the roots between May and September and sprayed with herbicide.



Smooth Brome
Bromus inermis

The extensive roots of this cool season grass help it out-compete other plants. Dig any time or spray in fall after repeated severe freezing to carry the herbicide deep into its root system.

Leave Plants Standing

Lower temperatures are an opportunity to give attention to the trees and shrubs in your landscape. **Pruning** woodies while they are dormant maximizes time for wound sealing, so take advantage after brushing up on proper techniques at treesaregood.org.

As food for critters gets scarce, make sure to **protect young trees** and shrubs from browsing by caging or fencing them above and below snow line. (Species preferred by deer and rabbits include oak, maple, walnut, hackberry, pine, juniper, dogwood, sumac, hawthorn, serviceberry, apple, cherry and plum.)

Winter is an invitation to leave other plants alone, since beneficial insects overwinter in dead leaves and stems. **Wait until spring** to deal with old plant material. As long as the right plants are in the right place, you shouldn't have to worry about watering this season, either.



Last season's growth, along with deadwood from pruning, serves as insect and bird habitat when left in the garden.

WEEDS TO WATCH OUT FOR



Chickweed
Stellaria media

The best way to handle chickweed is pulling or raking, since the shallow roots make it easy to remove. Pull when soil is slightly damp to get as many roots as possible since it does re-sprout. (wildedible.com photo)



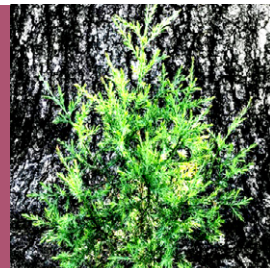
Downy Brome
Bromus tectorum

A winter annual grass that produces seed in June. Control it before seeds drop. Pulling and tilling/hoeing are effective, as well as glyphosate herbicides. (UNL newsroom photo)



Henbit
Lamium amplexicaule

A common annual weed that should be pulled or treated as soon as it greens during warmer winter days or early spring. If pulled or treated early it is fairly easy to control and unlikely to out-compete desired plants.



Eastern Redcedar
Juniperus virginiana

Small seedlings can be controlled by digging or repeated mowing. Larger trees must be cut; although this is time-consuming, it's very effective since trees cut below the lowest branches won't re-sprout.



Marestalk
Erigeron canadensis

Fairly easy to pull or dig in the landscape. Large infestations can be treated with glyphosate; multiple treatments may be necessary. *This and many other images taken by intern Patrick Murphy.