

## An Article of Interest Managing weeds (Part 2 of 2)

### **Cultivating**

For larger areas, such as orchards, vacant lots, roadsides, or plots intended for future garden use, use of a rototiller or disc will do the job. These methods not only knock down the weeds but also incorporate them into the soil, where they decay to form humus. Some weeds may sprout again from the roots or crowns, so you may need to till several times.

### **Mowing**

Rotary mowers and weed eaters are other good choices for weed control in larger areas. Both tools cut the weeds; weed eaters leave the severed tops behind, while mowers grind them up as they cut them. Of course, these methods do leave the weeds' roots and crowns behind to grow again.

### **Flamers**

Powered by propane or a mixture of propane and butane, these devices are not meant to burn weeds. Instead, they heat them to the point that their cell walls burst. Though this damage is enough to kill many weeds, types with deep perennial roots usually regrow; eradicating these requires several treatments. Take care when using flamers around mulches, and never use them in dry, fire-prone areas.

### **Ground covers**

Sometimes called living mulches, are effective in preventing weed growth: like organic and inorganic mulches, they keep sunlight from reaching weeds and their seeds. For the first few seasons after you plant a ground cover, you'll usually have to do some hand weeding or apply mulch, but as the cover grows and spreads to form a tight carpet, weed growth is much reduced.

### **Smothering**

Also effectively kills weeds in areas earmarked for future planting. After mowing or cutting off the top growth, lay down a mulch of heavy cardboard or newspaper, in a layer at least three dozen sheets thick or black plastic. Overlap these materials so weeds can't grow through the cracks. Anchor the covering in place with a layer of bark chips or other organic mulch. Leave this smothering mulch in place for at least a full growing season; allow a year or more for tough weeds.

### **Mulches**

Like any other seeds, weed seeds require sunlight, warmth, and moisture to germinate and grow. Mulches block light from the soil below, thus preventing the seedlings from becoming established. They also help keep soil moist and modulate its temperature. You can choose from organic or inorganic mulches.

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**Bryan S. McNee**  
859-224-2442 ext 226

American Lending Group  
880 Corporate Drive  
Suite 210  
Lexington, KY 40503  
859-312-6327 (cell)  
Fax: 859-224-8123 (fax)  
[bmcnee@americanlending.com](mailto:bmcnee@americanlending.com)  
[www.americanlending.com](http://www.americanlending.com)



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