The SEEDLING

Newsletter of the Burnaby and Region Allotment Gardens Association

Five great reasons to compost

1. Reduce your garbage. Organic waste (such as kitchen vegetable scraps and garden clippings) make up 30% per cent of the household garbage currently being sent to the landfill. Composting your organic waste is a great way to reduce this volume.

2. It's easy. Setting up a compost in your household is simple and inexpensive. Everyone in the home can participate and feel good about making a difference.

3. Help the environment. Less waste means less trucks on the road, less methane gas generated from the landfills, and recycling nutrients back into the earth.

4. Improve your garden Your compost will help your garden soil retain moisture after rain or watering.

5. Reduce use of chemical fertilizers. Keep local waterways clean by avoiding chemical fertilizers. Composting returns nutrients to the garden.

https://www.burnaby.ca/Assets/city+services/garbage+and+recycling/education+and+guidelines/Sanitation+- Here$!27s+the+Dirt+Backyard.pdf

July 2019

Horsetail:

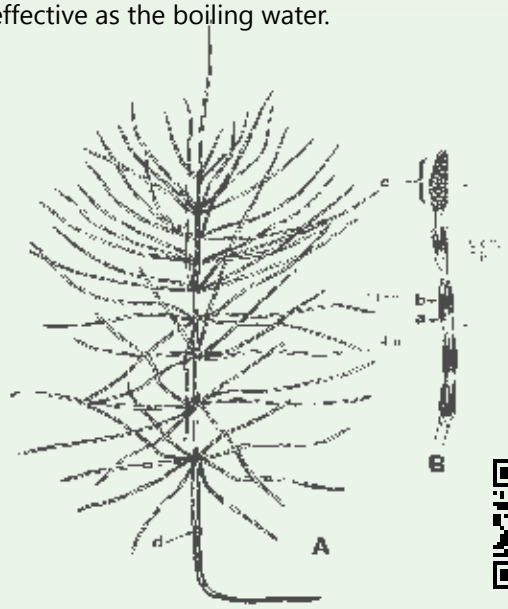
Particularly troublesome due to its prolific rhizome and tuber system, the rhizomes grow vertically to 6 feet deep and horizontally to depths of 10 - 20 inches. The horizontal rhizomes branch freely, forming rounded tubers for food storage (by photosynthesis), and produce numerous shoots. The tubers develop into new plants if removed from the rhizome. Horsetail thrives in wet, poorly-drained, acid soil. The plant produces 2 types of stems - fertile stem and sterile stem. Fertile stems appear in early spring, sterile stems later.

Horsetail Control measures: Improved drainage, adequate lime and fertilization, repeated cutting and mechanical removal (digging by hand and pulling out the vertical and horizontal rhizomes) will help suppress horsetail growth. Removal of sterile stems (cutting them down) in early spring depletes the carbohydrate reserves and will eventually exhaust the rhizome. Because horsetail thrives in full sun, shading can help deter growth. Manual removal of the stems followed by mulching with black plastic can also be effective. Note: Tilling the soil can make the problem worse by spreading the rhizomes and/or tubers.

From University of Wisconsin Weed Science and Penn State Extension:

Weed Control without Pulling:

- Pour boiling hot water directly on the leaves, stems, and base of the weeds.
- Pour a mixture of 1 gallon white vinegar, 2 cups epsom salts, and 1/4 cup regular blue Dawn dish detergent directly onto leaves, stems, and base of weeds. Almost as effective as the boiling water.



The Weed Story

By David Tamblin

If there is one crop that can be guaranteed to grow it is weeds. Any unoccupied area of the garden won't stay that way for long. Many crops will be overtaken and stunted by a determined and unwanted competition. One good way to look at this invasion is to consider where the weeds came from, why they are successful and how to live with them because they are unlikely to be eradicated.

Ten thousand years ago as the last ice age came to an end, all of the Lower Mainland (and a lot more of Canada) was completely devoid of plant life. But a host of plants were waiting to fill the void. And plants have filled every available space since then. Indigenous people found uses for many plants, but they didn't engage in agriculture as we know it; there was little cultivation and hence no weeds.

The European influx that began five centuries ago brought agriculture. It brought new edible and medicinal plants to North America. While some plants with no known uses undoubtedly hitched a ride, most of the influx were plants with specific purposes. Doctors were expensive and rare, but medicinal plants were a widely understood healing resource. So many of the plants in a herbalist's garden were introduced here. There was also a tradition of edible plants in Europe, quite different from and far beyond the rather limited supply one is apt to find in a modern supermarket. Many Of the denizens of European and near Eastern gardens came along, in many cases escaping their horticultural confines.

So now we have a plethora of plants. We have the natives, some very useful to us, but others with no discovered human purposes. We have food plants of all kinds, medicinal plants and garden ornamentals, some retaining their original use, but many whose use is lost in the mists of time. Some of these are hardy species who have now joined with the casual interlopers and all compete with native plants for growing space. Of course they want to encroach on our tidy gardens.

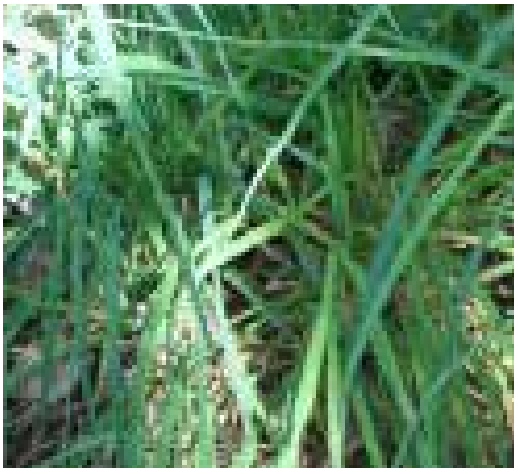
It is not easy to say exactly what a weed is. The classical definition (Emerson's) was any plant whose use has not been discovered. How about: any plant that we did not invite that grows in our space. But there is a bit more to it: most plants that we call weeds are super growers: if annuals,

They produce seeds by the thousands; if perennials they may spread by underground roots or rhizomes, extending beyond all barriers with stupefying speed and persistence. Take the example of Bishop's weed: it grows rapidly from underground rhizomes that easily break, each piece being capable of forming a new plant. If allowed to flower it produces hundreds of seeds.

It didn't come uninvited, originally the Romans used it as a vegetable, medieval monks grew it to relieve the pangs of arthritis, Edwardians introduced it to their borders, it is still available in nurseries.

There is lots of confusion with weed names. All plants are given scientific names; they are often mouthfuls, not often known or used by ordinary gardeners. Common plants have common names unfortunately the common names vary from place to place, person to person and culture to culture. Take Bishop's weed again: its scientific name is Aegopodium podagraria – it doesn't trip off the tongue, does it? Use the common name, but which one, it can be Bishop's weed, Bishop's goutweed, goutweed, ground elder, herb Gerard – take your pick!

Since gardeners want only their chosen plants to flourish here are some suggestions on how to deal with those encroachers: first and most importantly is to know what you are dealing with. Identify the plant; once that is done there is usually all kinds of good advice on what to do, all you have to do is find the time, the energy and the patience.



Quackgrass - spreader by underground rhizomes

Dandelions and purple lamium - a bee's dream lunch and a gardener's nightmare.

One obvious strategy is to eat them or find another use for them. Lots of weeds were originally introduced edibles. Here are a few examples:

- Purslane, a determined summer weed, is grown as a commercial crop in Europe; it can be added to salad or stews, cooked much like spinach. Low in carbohydrates it is a good source of omega-3, vitamins B and C, and several minerals.
- Lamb's quarters (Chenopodium album, also referred to as pigweed) is a common visitor at BARAGA where we have several other chenopodiums. This Iron Age crop can also be treated much like spinach. (Incidentally, despite its name, in quantity it is poisonous to sheep and pigs.)
– Burdock (Arctium lappa, is known as gobo in Japan) lurks at the edges of our gardens. It is grown commercially in Asia especially Japan and the roots used much like carrots.
- Nettles (Urtica dioica) also lurk everywhere at the edges of BARAGA. It is another ancient vegetable; young nettles can be gathered freely with gloved hands; they are used in soup, stews, or as greens. They are high in protein and minerals.

- Blackberries grow all around the edges of BARAGA. They are tasty, versatile and nutritious. Their seeds are freely distributed in bird guano so may appear in an allotment at any time. Once established they are invasive and very difficult to eradicate.

Bindweed is just starting out, using the skeletons of last year's plant to grow on, soon it will cover and hide the whole wall.

The only way to deal with many annual and biennial weeds is to hand pull and compost them. Weeds make good compost if removed before they set seed. Some weeds can't be left in the garden if the seeds are ripe they can be thoroughly dried out; once desiccated they can be safely composted. Lots of weeds can just be dug under and left to rot in situ. This doesn't work for purple lamium (Lamium amplexicaule, henbit, or dead nettle); if left in the ground it will re-sprout, if left on the soil it will re-root itself, and the plant will use all its remaining energy to set seed. Fortunately come summer, when it is hot and dry, lamium dies back and is no longer a problem. Chickweed is a similar, common weed in BARAGA gardens; it is edible like miner's lettuce and a winter annual, not much trouble in hot summertime. Every spring there in an invasion of shepherd's-purse; it is a short-lived annual, but is capable of massive seed production. It is an alternate host of several diseases and competes very successfully with crops for water and nutrients.

With perennial weeds mere pulling may not be enough. The gardener has to be patient, persistent and determined. If all new growth is regularly removed the plant will eventually die. Similarly if buried under some kind of heavy mulch – totally deprived of light – photosynthesis can't happen. Another strategy is pasteurization; a weedy patch is covered by a sturdy layer of clear plastic and left to bake in the hot sun. The heat generated will destroy many weeds and their seeds too.

Some weeds are particularly persistent and annoying:
- bindweed/convolvulus likes to play whack-a-mole and usually wins;
- yellow oxalis has a dainty yellow flower, but a choking habit;
- quack grass runneth everywhere;
- and horsetail, an ancient weed that will persist far beyond most gardeners.

Against these all there is to offer is Winston Churchill's famous phrase "toil, tears, and sweat", but hopefully no blood!

Purple lamium. After a winter of growth it bursts into flower and seed! Gardeners beware.

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Ryan's Rainbow Foodbank

Ryan's Rainbow is in need of a refrigerator or cooler. Any member that has a spare and wish to donate it, please email directors@baraga.ca

We have already had donations of greens and rhubarb for Ryan's Rainbow Outreach. As our gardens grow, please remember to share your produce and put your donations in the white box. Pickup are on Mondays

Thanks again to West Coast Seeds for donating seeds that were distributed to members at the AGM in January.

We would like to recognize gardeners who donate produce to other organizations, including Saint Thomas More Collegiate on Sunday mornings, as part of the Plant A Row Grow A Row (PARGAR) Program.

We apologize for any confusion we might have caused using the Plant a Row, Donate a Row phrase.

How to Grow Goji Berries

It's a slow process to grow Goji berries from seed, but once plants are established, they are highly productive. Plants will produce some fruit in the second year of growth, but from year three on, each plant will provide for healthful harvests of Goji berries.

Latin
Lycium barbarum
Family: Solanaceae

Difficulty
Moderately difficult

Season & Zone
Exposure: Full sun
Zone: 3-10 – Goji dislikes extreme cold or heat

Timing
Sow indoors about 6 to 8 weeks before the last frost. That's early to mid-February on the coast. It's important to cultivate strong seedlings, so once the seeds sprout, use generous artificial light.

Starting
Sow 2 to 3 seeds in each pot, about 5mm (¼") deep. Use a sterilized seed starting mix, and do not add fertilizer. Keep soil moist until seeds germinate, and then put under bright lights. After the third true leaf emerges, transplant each seedling on to its own individual pot. Gentle hardening off of seedlings is essential in order to avoid transplant shock.

Growing
Goji is a shrubby plant that can, in time, grow 1-3m (3-10') tall. Growers space Goji plants 60cm (24") apart in rows that are 2m (6') apart. Spaced this way, 15 plants in a 30 foot row can produce up to 100 lbs of berries in a year. Goji is self pollinating, so even a single plant will produce fruit.

Goji is unusual in that it prefers relatively infertile, slightly alkaline soil with a pH range of 6.8 to 8.1. Goji reacts poorly to fertilizer and manure, so if you're growing in a large container, use simple top soil with some perlite mixed in for drainage. Avoid peat-based soils.

If severe winter weather is expected, it is wise to mulch around the bases of your Goji plants, or move container plants into a cool but frost free area such as a garage.

Source:
https://www.westcoastseeds.com/blogs/how-to-grow/grow-goji-berries