

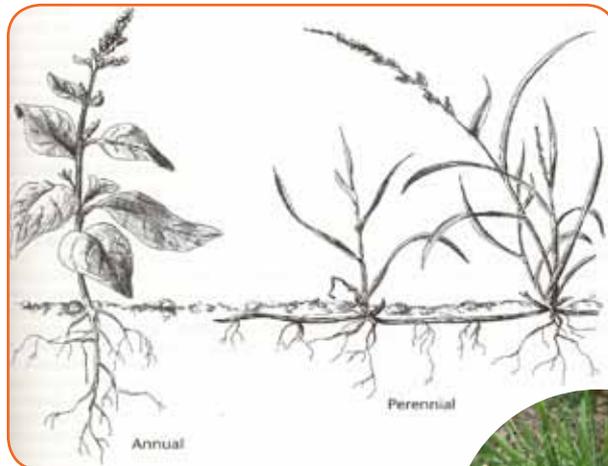
Weeds are part of nature. They are mostly a visual problem but some weeds such as poison ivy cause more serious problems.

Weeds compete for water and food. Left unmanaged, weeds produce seeds which spread and start new infestations.

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What are “weeds?”

Weeds are plants growing where they are not wanted. Knowledge of their growth pattern is important to select the best method of control.



Annual weeds

They germinate, grow and die within one year. They grow rapidly and produce ample seeds. Examples include groundsel and black medic. Annual weeds are easy to hand remove because of the small root system (picture above, weed on the left).

Biennial weeds

They grow from seed then form a few leaves and a tap root. The second year these weeds grow vigorously, produce seeds and die. An example of biennial weed is common mullein. Biennials are easier to manage the first year. The second year, the roots grow vigorously.

Perennial weeds

These plants live for many years. Some grow from seeds, such as dandelion. Others also grow from creeping roots, such as couch grass (picture above, weed on the right). Perennial weeds are very difficult to control. Many are also considered noxious, such as Canada thistle and bindweed.

Managing weeds naturally

Mulch the soil of flower and shrub beds. Cover the soil with grass clippings, newspaper, bark chips or other commercial products (picture below and to left). Shading the surface helps prevent seed germination.

Remove weeds before they go to seed. Weeds grow rapidly and reproduce quickly. Many can produce 10,000 to 30,000 seeds per plant!

Remove weeds near fences and buildings. Weeds in unmanaged areas are a source of seeds for adjoining lawns, flower and shrub beds.



Prepare seed beds one month before planting. Dig and irrigate to germinate the weed seeds buried in the soil. Return later to remove the young weeds.

Limit the access of weeds to water. Use drip irrigation to water plants. Overhead irrigation brings water that helps weed seeds germinate.

Keep cutting top growth of perennial weeds. The plant can regrow from the roots. Removal of top growth prevents photosynthesis. A sustained effort is required to deplete food reserve in the roots.

About using pesticides

The following are least-toxic pesticides that are on the “excluded list” and are exempt from the restrictions of the Pesticide Bylaw. They are available at most garden centers.

Acetic acid

This product is similar to household vinegar, but more concentrated to obtain weed control. It must be applied on the weed to kill plant parts directly contacted.

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Apply on a warm day to actively growing young weeds.

Fatty acid

It is a naturally-occurring acid formulated for weed control. It acts on contact to kill foliage. Both products are contact herbicides that kill only above-ground foliage. They are effective on annual weeds but less effective on perennial weeds. Avoid desirable plants.

Apply these “excluded” pesticides only when necessary. Read the label for registered uses and precautions. Wear gloves, minimize skin contact and spray only the affected plants.

Seek help for severe weed problems. Noxious weeds such as knapweed (picture to right) are regulated by the Noxious Weed Bylaw. They must be controlled in residential areas. For the best course of action, consult with a garden center or a certified pesticide applicator.



For weeds, prevention is key

Always ask the question: what can I do to prevent weeds from growing in the first place? Mulches of grass clippings, newspaper or other materials are effective to stop weed growth.

Permanently cover the soil where no plant is grown near a building or under a fence. Prevent weed growth with landscape cloth covered with rocks, or similar materials. In shrub beds and under trees, use ground covers to occupy the space and out compete the weeds. Mulch the soil with compost or wood chips. Weed seeds cannot germinate in the absence of sunlight.

Kelowna’s Pesticide Regulation Bylaw No. 9920

The City of Kelowna’s Pesticide Bylaw, passed in January 2009, regulates the use of pesticides for non-essential (cosmetic) purposes.

Pesticides are products used to control unwanted weeds, fungi and insects. Under the Pesticide Bylaw, most pesticides cannot be applied on a residential property.

Least-toxic pesticides on the “excluded list” are exempt from the restrictions of the Bylaw. Certified pesticide applicators are also exempt from the restrictions of the bylaw.

To view the entire bylaw and pesticides on the “excluded list”, refer to kelowna.ca/environment, under Pesticide Free.