

## WEEDS

All the plants we now grow for food have their origin in wild plants. Among the weeds found in a garden, many are edible and quite nutritious. Some are actually staple food for people in other cultures. In China, for example, pigweed is used like spinach, and is served in many different dishes. In fact, weeds can be a good source of food if you know how to identify the safe, edible types. There are a few, though, that are poisonous, so never let the children eat anything you're not sure of.



pigweed

Weeds are usually carried into the garden by wind or water, or on animals, equipment and clothing. Once in the garden, weeds take space, sunlight, nutrients and moisture away from vegetables. The best control method is to keep them out of the garden in the first place.

This means that before you plant you must clear off all weeds. For grass and other weeds that spread by sending out underground runners, you will need to remove every bit of root and stem. To do this, soak the soil thoroughly, at least one foot deep. Let it start to dry out, then dig deeply with a pick or shovel and carefully remove all traces of the weeds. If possible, get weeds out of your garden before they go to seed or you'll have many more in their place. Keep the area around your garden free of weeds so that weed seeds do not drift into your

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plot. Remember that mulching is a good way to reduce new weed growth.

Weeding can be done by hand pulling or hoeing. It is easier to pull weeds from soil that is moist and has been well worked because the soil will be looser. You can also turn weeds that have not gone to seed into the soil and let them rot. Most weeds can be added to the compost pile as long as they haven't gone to seed. Do not add Bermuda or similar grasses. These may not be killed in composting and could take root in the garden when the compost is added to the soil.