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**Understanding Weeds – But mostly How to Kill 'em**

**By L. J. Bruton**

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When I was a child, I loved to pick Dandelions. The pretty yellow flowers were small, colorful, and looked nice tucked behind my ear! However, if one had popped up in the front yard, my hair accessory would have been considered an atrocity!

I often feel sorry for weeds. They are plants too. In fact, if you flipped through a botany field guide, you may be surprised at the plants you find classified as weeds! But simply put, a weed is really defined as a plant out of place. Clover in one persons flowing lawn may be considered fashionable, whereas on another, not. Golf greens are often covered with bentgrass, but if it crept up in some yards, it would be considered a weed.

While perhaps pretty on their own, weeds stick out like a sore thumb in yards because they may be of a different color, size or texture. This is distracting from the beauty of the otherwise sprawling green turf. Aside from aesthetic values, weeds can also drain nutrients from grass and other plants, and this competition of resources can thin what should be lush. And what's worse is that weeds are fighters. They can withstand conditions that your wanted greens cannot, so they are almost inevitable!

Treating weeds begins with correct identification. There are two classifications of weeds: Grassy and Broadleaf. These are further broken down into groups like perennial, biennial, and winter and summer annuals. These, as you may have guessed, depict their growing patterns. Grassy weeds are, as they sound, like grass. However, they are unwanted grass, or grass that is growing in a different type of lawn. Some examples are annual bluegrass, barnyard grass, crabgrass, creeping bentgrass and foxtail. Broadleaf weeds may appear more to be what most people picture weed-like growth to be. Since they are broad, they are more easily distinguished. Some examples are yarrow, knotweed, chickweed, clover, ground ivy, thistle and my favorite, the dandelion.

Once you understand what is growing in your lawn and decide that it is unwanted, you can treat it and/or control it. Weeds can actually be controlled by your lawn care maintenance. If you maintain a dense and vigorously growing lawn, you are already combating the problem. Weeds can be a sign of underlying problems in the environment beneath. So by just killing them, you are simply putting on a

band-aid, not solving the problem.

For example, some weeds grow in situations of compacted soil, such as knotweed. You can also control the growth by taking better care of the grass, rather than focus on the weeds. You can raise or lower the mowing height, change the frequency of mowing and changing the amount of time between irrigating. Also, you can increase or decrease application of fertilizer and aerify the soil. This will maintain better grass, thus keeping the growth dense and vigorous, which as discussed above, does not attract weeds.

In addition to culture practices, sometimes the assistance of chemicals is needed to control weed growth. In that case, there are several types of herbicides that can be used. Preemergence herbicides will affect seeds that are germinating. Since they are best used two to three weeks before the seeds

start to grow, these work best to combat annual weeds. Postmergence herbicides are used, as their prefix implies, after the weeds have sprouted. Since they must be absorbed through the leaves, this types of herbicide works best with a spray.

These can be used at any time, but are most effective when the weed is still young and growing. Selective postmergence herbicides are usually used to control annual, biennial and perennial broadleaf weeds, as they will not damage grass. But, they can kill trees, shrubs and flowers. These have to be used in proper conditions as well, with no rain in the forecast for two days to follow, air 60–80 degrees and no winds. Finally, non-selective postmergence herbicides kill all types of weeds, and are best used to spot treat grassy weeds that are not affected by the selective herbicides.

So next time you see a Dandelion plant growing, don't make a wish and blow the seeds toward in the direction of a lawn fanatic– they may not get the perfectly manicured lawn they wished for!

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## **Brick Patio Weed Control**

**By Hans Dekker**

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#### **Brick Patio Weed Control**

In researching this article, I found one instance where a homeowner was so incensed by the weeds in her patio that she set fire to them with a blowtorch! Luckily, several items provide better service as a weeding tool and there are several better alternatives for brick patio weed control.

Of course, the best method of brick patio weed control is proper installation of your brick patio. An under-layment of pea gravel, topped by a layer of sturdy landscape cloth, covered with a layer of sand will give your brick patio a firm footing as well as cramp the style of any weeds in the area. Nevertheless, if your brick patio is already installed and running rampant with weeds, here are some

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tips to help you succeed in brick patio weed control.

First, to make your brick patio weed control plan a success, implement your plan before weeds flower. This keeps weeds from going to seed and helps make a short-term plan last for a longer time.

For the following tip and other tips that involve weed dousing of one sort or another, use a piece of cardboard or scrap of Plexiglas to protect nearby plants.

One of the best ways to kill a vegetable of any kind is to cook it. Boiling water is a natural and very inexpensive weed-wilder and works to kill most forms of annual weeds and kills or weakens many types of perennial weeds. A teakettle is your weeding tool. Fill it with water and bring it to a boil. While you're waiting (because a watched pot never boils, you know!) go outside and cut the culprits down to their crowns. When the water begins to boil, grab the kettle (using a potholder) and pour the water on the crowns of the weeds, holding the kettle high enough only to avoid splashing. Killing weeds with boiling water will also scald any biological organisms that get splashed, but more will return as soon as the soil cools.

Vinegar will kill most weeds. However, grocery store vinegar is normally a 5% solution and is too weak to do the job. Ten-percent vinegar will kill most weeds and usually is found where canning and pickling supplies are sold. A 20% solution of vinegar kills really stubborn weeds, but is frequently more than twice as expensive as 10%. Try the 10% for brick patio weed control before you make the investment in a stronger solution. Spray the vinegar directly on the weeds, using the shield mentioned above and taking care not to inhale fumes. You may also want to wear gloves and eye protection as a further safeguard for this type of brick patio weed control.

I'm the owner and one of the site [Patio Furniture Guides](#)"Visit our site for more ideas, tips and tricks



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