

# Green Notes

## THE WAR ON WEEDS

Weeds are a pest; possibly the worst, most common pest in any landscape. It is impossible to prevent the appearance of weeds, because the seeds are carried in on the wind, water, or by animals. In some cases, like in turfgrass, it is extremely difficult to completely eliminate weeds in all but the most intensively managed areas, like golf greens. However, an acceptable level of management can be attained if certain basic guidelines are followed.

### Know your enemy

**ID YOUR WEEDS.** Weeds fall into several categories:

- ANNUAL/ PERENNIAL
- GRASS/ SEDGE/ BROADLEAF
- SUMMER/ WINTER

Correct ID will determine *when* you control a weed, *how* you control it, and *what* chemicals you can effectively use, if needed. For help in identifying your weeds and learning the best specific management methods for them, use this website:

[http://ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/weeds\\_intro.html](http://ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/weeds_intro.html)

You may also want to purchase a reference guide with photos like *Weeds of the West* or *Weeds of California and Other Western States*. Using chemicals or methods on weeds for which they are not approved can cause more harm than good, and is often a waste of time and money.

### Prep for battle before planting

**1. PREPARE THE SOIL.** Break up the soil in the area to be planted and irrigate to germinate any weed seeds already in the soil. These can



Dandelion in turfgrass

be eliminated with shallow hoeing, scraping, tilling, or mowing if they are annual weeds, or with systemic herbicides for perennials. This process may need to be repeated to eliminate all the seeds and propagules present. Once good control is achieved, avoid turning the soil over deeply again, or other dormant seeds buried deep in the soil may surface and become a problem after planting.

**2. ATTACK NEW WEEDS QUICKLY.** Procrastination is also your enemy in weed control. In a newly planted area, whether beds or turf, control any new weeds when they first appear to prevent a bigger infestation should they set seed or begin to spread by roots or rhizomes.

Mulch (with or without weed cloth beneath it) can greatly reduce the weed establishment in newly planted beds. Weeds that do pop up are much easier to quickly remove by hand when they sprout in mulch, because they are typically shallow-rooted.

# GREEN NOTES

2013

2

SUMMER

## In established plantings

Whether you are managing turf or beds and borders, there are a variety of options for weed control, and a *combination* of tactics appropriate to the site and the weeds is your best bet. These methods include using mulch for suppression, hand-pulling, hoeing, mowing and string-trimming, flaming, steaming, and herbicides.

**ANNUAL/BIENNIAL WEEDS** These are plants that sprout, grow, set seed, and die within one year (or in the second year with biennials). Because their roots do not stay alive below ground after the tops die, they are the easiest to control. Annual grass weeds, however, have a growing point that is very low, so simply cutting the tops off will not control them unless you scrape them to the ground.

Whatever control measure you use, whether manual or chemical, **DO IT BEFORE THEY SET SEED!** Consistent, early removal of annual weeds can significantly reduce their numbers in following years.

**PERENNIAL WEEDS** These live for more than one year, and can be much more difficult to control. Because their roots typically store reserves of energy, removing the tops alone by mowing, hoeing, or flaming is usually not sufficient to kill the entire plant, which will simply put up new growth.

Perennials can spread by both seeds and by sending out roots or rhizomes. Some perennials, like bindweed, produce large numbers of underground roots and stems that make timing your attack very crucial. Translocated herbicides like glyphosate can give fairly good control when applied at the point of greatest vulnerability - when the plant has spent most of its reserves

Examples from UC IPM Weeds in Lawns table

Weed Species	Conditions	Managment
Annual bluegrass	overwatering; compacted soil	reduce irrigation; aerate
crabgrass	frequent light watering; mowing too short	water longer/ less often; raise mowing height
burclover; white clover	low nitrogen fertility	fertilize
spurge	low mowing height; low nitrogen; bare spots	check mowing ht.; fertilize; remove quickly
nutsedge	overwatering; poor drainage; nearby plants	reduce irrigation; aerate; remove quickly



**Spotted spurge: remove quickly!**

and is actively growing. With bindweed, for instance, spraying at the appearance of the first flowers gives the most effective control. Other plants should be sprayed before flowers appear, since they may set seed very quickly, and thus multiply before they die. To inform your weed management decisions, download these excellent free publications to use as guidelines:

1. Weed Management in Landscapes

<http://ucanr.edu/sites/sjcoeh/files/77102.pdf>

2. Weed Management in Lawns

<http://ucanr.edu/sites/sjcoeh/files/77114.pdf>

If you choose to use pre-emergent herbicides, be sure to time your applications in early fall and early spring to coincide with the rainfall that encourages the subsequent weed growth.

**DO SOME RECONNAISSANCE** Regular monitoring of your sites for problem weed areas will make sure your efforts at control aren't wasted. Note where the issues are: in many cases a weed problem can be greatly reduced by making some changes in the cultural management of an area. In fact, some weeds are an indicator of issues with water management, fertility, or soil conditions. Examples can be seen in the table below. To see a more complete table of turf weeds and their associated issues:

<http://ipm.ucdavis.edu/TOOLS/TURF/PESTS/specialprob.html>



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## GREEN NOTES

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and ISA Certified Arborists.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

<http://ucanr.org/GreenGardener>

SUMMER

3

2013

## MANAGING FIREBLIGHT IN FLOWERING PEARS

**WHAT IS IT?** Fireblight is a disease caused by a bacterium called *Erwinia amylovora*. It affects some members of the rose family including apple, pear, pyracantha, cotoneaster, photinia, loquat, and toyon. In landscapes, flowering pears and crabapples are particularly susceptible. It is spread by insects traveling from flower to flower and by splashing rain. If infections are left to overwinter, they become sources of new infection the following spring.

**WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?** Blossoms, new leaves, or entire branch tips will suddenly wilt, turn brown and die. The disease may progress rapidly down individual branches or throughout the crown of a tree, as shown in the photo to the right. If infected branches are not removed, the bacteria will overwinter, and lesions may develop in the bark on the branches or trunk, which serve as sources of further infection.

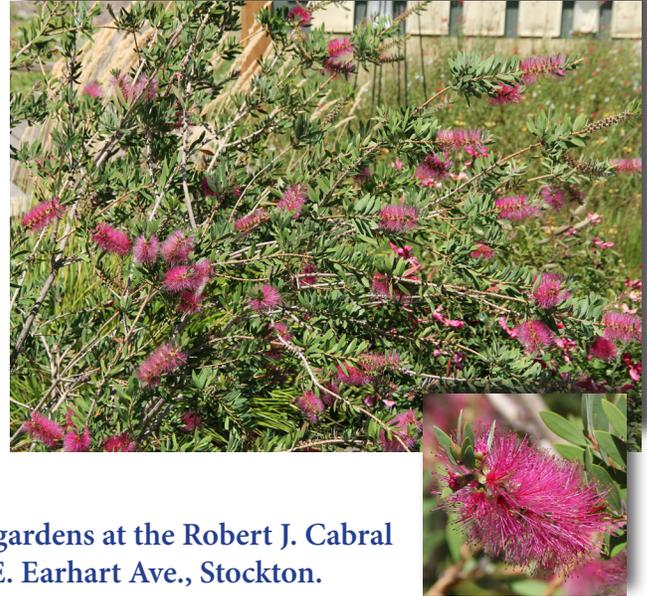
**WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?** Prune out all infected twigs and branches at least 6–8” below the sign of infection. Remove all infected wood from the site. Dip tools frequently in a 10% bleach solution to avoid spreading the bacteria on your pruning tools. Begin scouting for signs early in spring on susceptible trees and shrubs or those that have been affected in previous years.



## PLANT THIS

*Callistemon citrinus* 'Violaceus' or 'Jeffersii'

This lovely evergreen shrub is sometimes called dwarf, pink, or purple bottlebrush. A good choice for informal plantings, this Australian native grows 6' high (possibly 10' with age) x 4' wide, and can be pruned for a denser, more formal habit. It blooms much of the year, and its beautiful violet pink flowers attract all kinds of pollinators, including honey bees and hummingbirds. A low-water user, this hardy shrub is rarely bothered by pests or diseases.



This can be seen blooming in the demonstration gardens at the Robert J. Cabral Agricultural Center's Learning Landscape, 2101 E. Earhart Ave., Stockton.

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