



A27 When is a weed not a weed?



Weeds are fascinating plants. Some are attractive, help wildlife or are even edible! They can also smother and compete with other plants, reducing harvests and spreading pests. Learning about weeds helps you identify the main types and decide how to remove those weeds that cause more harm than good.

Resources

- Pen and paper
- Weedy site
- Hand fork (optional)
- Camera (optional)

Activity

- 1 Visit a weedy garden, removing or taking photographs of all the weeds you can find.
- 2 Try to name the weeds. See identification websites.
- 3 Identify the main growing characteristics, eg annual or perennial, smothering growth habit or low growing, etc. How do these habits affect how you remove and dispose of the weed? See also B4.8 and B5.9.

Extended activities

- 1 Research the benefits/other uses of weeds, eg some butterflies breed on nettles; their caterpillars attract birds to your garden that feed on pests!
- 3 Observe which of your plants 'suffer' the most from weeds growing nearby, eg cabbage or onion?

Top tip



Weed identification and information

These websites have good weed photos and growing details. Some have an agricultural or commercial horticultural slant (reflecting global research into weed science and control), but apply as much for school gardens and education.

- Bayer Crop Science
www.bayercropscience.co.uk (under e-tools)
- Garden Organic
www.gardenorganic.org.uk/organicweeds (under weed information)
- The Seed Site (informal reference)
<http://theseedsite.co.uk/weeds.html>



Health & Safety

Be careful when handling weeds. Many have sharp, rough, or sticky growth and the rootballs can be heavy.

See also *Health and Safety Guidelines* (Section B3.3)

Further information

B4.8 Removing weeds and grass
B5.9 Weeding made easy