

# REDUCING PESTICIDES

it's perfectly natural.



## Managing Weeds the Natural Way

A pesticide-free lawn doesn't mean a lawn full of weeds. In fact, weeds often indicate an unhealthy or stressed lawn. Improper maintenance practices such as over- or under-watering or improperly fertilizing can create a thin lawn and weak soil, which is the perfect environment for weeds.

**The most common weeds are:**



**Dandelion**



**Black Medic**



**Crabgrass**



**Broadleaf Plantain**



**Creeping Charlie**



**Chickweed**

The best defence against weeds is to ensure your lawn is thick (to crowd out the weeds and prevent their seeds from sprouting), and to add nutrients to the soil each year with compost and natural fertilizer. Follow these tips to discourage weeds:

**Pull the weeds.** Do it by hand or mechanically and ensure the whole root is removed. As a lawn becomes healthier over the years, there will be fewer weeds to pull. Fast-spreading weeds like Creeping Charlie should be pulled as soon as you see them.

**Limit the spread of weeds.** Mow dandelions before they mature to seed-filled 'puff balls' and monitor your lawn or garden for early weed seedlings.

**Spread grass seed.** A thick lawn is the most reliable way to resist weeds because weed seeds and "runners" cannot grow. Sow grass seed every Spring and Fall.

**Feed your soil.** Spread compost on your lawn in the Spring to improve the health of your soil, and apply a natural fertilizer in Fall. Black Medic often thrives in low-nitrogen soils.

**Increase shade.** Raise your lawnmower height to 7.5 cm (3 in) and you'll find that longer grass will shade out weed seeds and prevent sprouting, as well as improving soil moisture. This is a particularly effective approach against crabgrass.

**Aerate.** Some weeds, such as broadleaf plantain, thrive in compacted soil. Aeration will help fix compacted soil and allow water and nutrients to reach grass roots.

More information about these techniques can be found in *Pesticide-Free...A Guide to Natural Lawn and Garden Care* available at [www.toronto.ca/pesticides](http://www.toronto.ca/pesticides).

The City of Toronto's Pesticide By-law permits the use of certain lower-risk pest control products for weed control, such as acetic acid (horticultural vinegar), herbicidal soap and corn gluten meal. Follow all label directions.

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