

REACH “Good Health News” June 22, 2020

THE BENEFITS OF WEEDS AND TIPS FOR THE FRUGAL GARDENER

“Weeds are flowers too, once you get to know them”. A.A. Milne
(Winnie the Pooh)

“I was just sittin’ here enjoyin’ the company. Plants got a lot to say, if you take the time to listen”. Eeyore



The Benefits of Garden Weeds

People usually are frustrated by weeds in their garden, hopefully learning about their benefits will help accept and even begin to like them.

- 1) Weeds protect soil. They are fast growing, so they can cover bare ground quickly to protect it. Their roots hold soil together and keep it from eroding
- 2) Weeds help to fertilize the soil. Many weeds accumulate vital nutrients from the subsoil and bring the nutrients into their leaves. As the leaves die back, they make a healing medicine (fertilizer for damaged topsoil)
- 3) Weeds condition soil. Decaying roots add organic matter to the soil. They provide channels for rain and air to penetrate.
- 4) Weeds attract beneficial insects. They are usually quick to sprout, yet short-lived. Their flowering and their dense foliage can attract beneficial insects looking for habitats or nectar.

Many weeds are as pretty as flowers: Queen Anne’s Lace, All kinds of Milkweed (also habitat for butterflies), even the common Dandelion!

Money-Saving Tips for the FRUGAL GARDENER

Gardens are great! They add curb appeal. Increase your home’s value. Create a space for our beloved wildlife. Provide a place for your family’s rest and relaxation. Create a natural place for good mental health and healthy well-being. Gives you vegetables and fruit to help you save on your budget. Hopefully, you’ll see a few money-saving gardening tips which you’d like to try!



- 1) Grow Self-Seeding Flowers. Self-seeding flowers, like hollyhocks are a real money saver. The secret is to sow them where they have a chance to succeed (read recommendations on seed package) and then allow some of the fading flowers go to seed. Some great self-seeders include rudbeckia, sunflower, cleome, zinnia, bachelor’s buttons, poppies and cosmos
- 2) Use a rain barrel, the water is warm and has 50% more oxygen in it, so flowers benefit because they don’t suffer the cold-water shock and it saves on your water bill, conserves water. Just buy a barrel from the garden center, fit it to your existing gutter system. You can also make your own, by using a old plastic trash can, cut a hole in the lid and use mesh to block the cut hole (prevents mosquitoes from entering the barrel). If you buy water-wise plants, you’ll also conserve water. Drought resistant plants include Echinacea, Lavender, Thyme, Meadow sage, Russian Sage, etc.

- 3) Make your lawn smaller and you'll save money over time. Who needs a huge lawn to mow, fertilize and water all the summer long? Cut your lawn's size and replace with low-maintenance shrubs, succulents, or groundcovers. Use some free mulch to smother the remaining grass. Tip: flatten old cardboard boxes or spread out newspapers below the mulch. The layer prevents weeds from poking thru.
- 4) Make your own plant food. Mix one part distilled vinegar and 8 parts water. Mix one part sugar and 8 parts water. Combine the vinegar mixture with sugar mixture. Spray or scatter lightly on the soil around your plants. This makes a liquid plant nutrient.
- 5) Use coffee grounds and tea bags in your garden. Make your plants lush and happy with the use of used coffee grounds and tea leaves. Coffee grounds have many uses, they contain 2 % of nitrogen, this acts as a long-acting fertilizer. They also provide other basic nutrients, like phosphorous and potassium. You can sprinkle it directly on the soil. They prevent soil-borne diseases like fungal rots and some bacterial pathogens. Teas open used tea bags and disperse the contents around the plants. Tea leaves will nourish your plants every time you water by increasing nitrogen levels, improving soil structure and giving earthworms something delicious to eat.
- 6) Make you own weed killer. Spray weeds with white distilled vinegar full strength. Repeat spray again on any new growth until the weeds die. Use full strength on weeds and grass growing between sidewalks and driveways. Remember, some "weeds" are beautiful (Queen Anne's Lace, Milkweed).
- 7) Free Mulch conserves water and cuts weeds. Grass clippings hold both nitrogen and moisture, so they're a good summer mulch when used correctly. First, if you're putting clippings around edibles, make sure the clippings are from an untreated lawn----you don't want to mulch with pesticides and herbicides accidentally. Second, spread the clippings lightly so they can dry out and don't and don't compact into a smelly mess. In the fall, you can add shredded leaves to the mix. They improve soil texture, fertility and moisture-holding capacity as they break down.
- 8) Wood chips for Free Mulch. Store-bought mulch has its place and looks great close to the front door, but it's a money-drainer, when it comes to large beds. Most municipalities have free supplies of wood chips for the taking. If not, simply call a tree service in your area and ask if you can have some of theirs. Some may even deliver it if they're grinding a tree in your area.
- 9) Start a compost. Make your own soil amendment by starting a compost. Follow these easy instructions (How to Save Money on Soil by Starting a Compost).

Next week, we'll talk about "Growing Young", How Friendship, Kindness and Optimism can help you live to 100. They may be more important or just as important as eating organic foods and going for a daily run!