

Vegetation Removal



If you are planning to renovate your landscape, removing any unwanted vegetation is an essential step. For the best results, it's important to remove it before preparing the soil and replanting the area.

There are several options for removing unwanted vegetation. Choose an option based on the vegetation that needs to be removed, the type of landscape you would like to install and your tolerance for chemicals.

The following is a summary of the most effective options.



Sod cutter

A sod cutter is a machine equipped with a blade that cuts the grass and weed roots one to two inches deep in the soil. The grass, weeds and soil are lifted off the soil surface and disposed.

Using a sod cutter is one of the fastest ways to remove unwanted grass and weeds. It works well on healthy or unhealthy lawns and common landscape weeds. It may not be very effective on deep-rooted weeds, which may grow back later. Depending on the project, you may end up with a large amount of material for disposal.

After sod removal, it's important to till in one to two inches of compost at least six inches into the soil afterward because much of the organic material is removed during sod removal.



Sheet mulching

Sheet mulching involves mowing or string trimming the grass and weeds, placing a layer of cardboard or newspaper on top of the vegetation, covering the area with four inches of mulch, then watering the area to settle the material on the soil surface.

Over a period of several months, the grass and weeds die due to lack of light. The area can then be planted with plants after the existing vegetation is dead.

Sheet mulching is a good approach if you prefer a chemical-free method that doesn't require a lot of heavy labor or machinery. In addition, the dead plant material improves the quality of the soil for future landscape plants.

To be effective, sheet mulching requires several months. On steep slopes, it can be problematic to keep the mulch from rolling downhill. It also is not recommended for areas under trees you want to keep, since the tree roots need regular oxygen and water.



Hand digging

Hand digging is simply using a shovel to lift unwanted plants out of the soil. **It is a good method for small areas or areas not accessible to machinery.** It's also one of the best options for underneath trees you plan to keep, since you can dig carefully and avoid damaging the tree's roots.

It's important to note that some weeds may regrow from small pieces of roots left in the soil. It's also impractical for large areas. Be sure to remove as much of the unwanted roots for best results.

Water efficiency videos are online at [youtube.com/springsutilities](https://www.youtube.com/springsutilities).





Spray method

The spray method involves applying a weed and grass killer to the leaves of unwanted vegetation, watering to get the vegetation to die, then removing any dead material, if required. Weed and grass killers with the active ingredient glyphosate are most commonly used. Since glyphosate is absorbed by plants through their leaves and has no residual activity in the soil, it can be used to selectively kill plants surrounded by plants you want to retain.

There are several advantages of using the spray method.

1. It's one of the best ways to permanently remove stubborn weeds.
2. It can be used on both slopes and, carefully, underneath trees without damaging the tree's health.
3. Dead vegetation can be tilled into the soil, which retains valuable organic matter.
4. Although a slower process than sod cutting or hand digging, it is a quicker process than sheet mulching.

There are also several disadvantages to the spray method.

1. It can take up to four applications of the weed and grass killer to completely kill some types of weeds. This could mean it might take a month or more to completely kill the unwanted vegetation.
2. After applying the herbicide, you must water the vegetation daily in order for the chemical to be effective. This is because it works on actively growing plants, not drought-stressed plants. This means your household water use will increase temporarily during your landscape renovation.

It's important to follow the safety precautions on the label of the herbicide.

Recommendations for your project

Use this table to determine which options may best suit your project.

Unwanted vegetation	Desired landscape	Recommended methods (choose one)
Lawn or lawn mixed with weeds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mulched planting bed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sheet mulching Spray and till Hand dig Sod cutter
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative turf from plugs or sod Renovated lawn from sod 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spray and till Hand dig Sod cutter
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative turf from seed Native grass area from seed Renovated lawn from seed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spray and core aerate heavily Spray and till Hand dig Sod cutter
Weeds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mulched planting bed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mow and sheet mulch Mow, spray and till Hand dig
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative turf from plugs or sod Renovated lawn from sod Alternative turf from seed Native grass area from seed Renovated lawn from seed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mow, spray and till Hand dig
Lawn or weeds under large trees that you want to keep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mulched planting bed Fine fescue alternative turf 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spray and carefully hand dig/ scrape off dead material Hand dig

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