



# Integrated Pest Management

## Ways to Control Weeds

### Cover Crops and Groundcovers

Weeds can be suppressed by competition from nearby plants. These desirable plantings out compete weeds primarily by blocking light and by competing for resources such as water. Bare ground is usually an invitation for weeds, and landscapes can be designed and maintained to minimize these open areas. Planting of specific groundcovering plants that effectively exclude sites for weed growth can be a successful strategy. Newly planted landscapes may require substantial weed control at first, but once the plantings have covered the area the need for weed control is often reduced. Also, use of plantings that require minimal irrigation can help in creating a site that is unfriendly to weed problems.

But even the most established groundcovers may still have some weeds mixed in. These weeds may be difficult to remove without harming the planting but extra effort should be made to catch these infestations early, before they create a serious problem.

In vegetable gardens, nurseries, cropland or similar sites, the use of a cover crop is a well known practice that is used to minimize weeds by establishing a dense stand of short-lived plants. These cover crops work by physically crowding out weeds, excluding light from the soil and using up available water and root space. They are often used temporarily during winter or other fallow seasons and have the additional advantage of supplying organic matter to the soil when they are subsequently tilled into the soil. Some cover crops like field peas and other legumes can actually contribute to the nutrient level of soil by fixing nitrogen from the air. When these plants decay in the soil this nitrogen becomes available for the next crop.



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