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Friend or Foe?

what you didn't know about weeds

Weeding is one of the most essential tasks in gardening, and the job is never done. These backyard “volunteers” always seem to find a way to thrive. Knowing your weeds can help you out. Some weeds are tricky to combat and can really hurt your plants, but others can be quite useful. Knowing these things can help lessen your load and maybe even bring a little something extra to your garden.

This video will focus on a few different weeds and how they might affect your garden.

1) Crabgrass and Quackgrass

Both identifiable by their segmented stems and long, slender leaves, crabgrass and quackgrass can be tricky. They're really not useful, and they can be a bit of a hindrance to the healthy growth of your garden. Neither is good to eat, and both tend to spread really quickly and can crowd out other more desirable plants, including the friendlier weeds.

Crabgrass has shallow roots, so it's fairly easy to control if you keep an eye out for it. Quack grass, however, is trickier. It thrives in cool weather and has deep root systems; you have to be vigilant with quack grass and make sure you're getting the entire plant out when you weed, or it will return with vigor.

These weeds have no particular value in your garden, so it's good to keep an eye out for them and tackle the problem before it gets out of hand.

2) Broadleaf Plantain

You can tell this pick this weed out from the crowd by its large, oval-shaped leaves that form a rosette.

It's important to keep this weed in check. It's particularly resilient and can crowd out other plants, like the grasses do.

However, this garden “volunteer” isn't all bad. The broadleaf plantain has been used in various contexts.

Its leaves and seeds are edible, either cooked or raw.

It has also been said to have medicinal qualities. Plantain extract, which can be released from the plant by chewing or crushing its leaves, can be applied to bug bites or other skin irritations to reduce inflammation.

3) **Purslane**

Growing along the ground, this creeping succulent has small, rounded leaves and a reddish stem. Be sure to keep an eye on the purslane in your garden. It's a notorious spreader and has the potential to get in the way.

However, instead of writing it off as yard waste, consider inviting this nutritious weed to your kitchen for a change.

Purslane contains five times more Omega-3 fatty acids than spinach, and it's also high in vitamin C. Purslane can be eaten raw or cooked, and this so-called-weed is even gaining popularity in the restaurant scene.

4) **Wood Sorrel**

Growing in bunches, wood sorrel is often mistaken for clover due to its heart-shaped leaves.

While it's not particularly beneficial for your garden, and can over-shadow and crowd other plants, it's edible and can be eaten as a microgreen.

Its tangy taste can add a lovely, almost lemony flavor to your salads, and its delicate leaves, which can be either purple or green, can add a visually pleasing touch to your plate!

5) **Dandelion**

Our last weed, recognized primarily by its golden bud, is a familiar sight to most.

Dandelions, though long-villainized in the gardening world, are actually highly useful. Every part of the dandelion--flower, leaves, and roots--can be used in some way.

The fibrous roots are often dried and consumed as tea, while the vitamin-rich leaves and flowers are better consumed whole, either raw or cooked.

Dandelions have also been used for various medicinal purposes. For anything from inflammation to cholesterol to liver health, the world of traditional medicine sings high praise for this diamond-in-the-rough.

While these are just a few of many examples, these profiles show that there might be more depth than you realize to the weeds you see every day in your garden. Next time you're outside, take a second to consider if your garden "foe" can't really be your "friend."

Sources:

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