

Getting Ahead of the Weeds

If you're tired of battling the summer weeds, then getting an early start is the answer. Once weeds are up and reseeding, it's tougher to get them under control. Here at the nursery we use a couple of systems that have proven to work for us. First off, learn a little about the weeds that are giving you the grief. Most weeds are annuals and the long term solution to them is to stop the reseeding process. This is best done by getting your mulch on in early spring before they sprout and begin setting seed. If they're already up, skip the step of hand weeding and lay down a thick layer of newspaper, or better yet some cardboard, before you apply your mulch. We find the best cardboard at furniture stores, which are usually glad to give you the boxes their refrigerators and furniture come packed in. Hard to kill perennial weeds like blackberry, nut grass and betony will not be stopped with a layer of mulch or cheap weed barriers, for these we lay down a woven plastic weed barrier cloth and then top dress with mulch.



Lastly, pay attention to what you're using as a mulch. We use a lot of Bermuda grass hay on the fruit trees and vegetables gardens. It's usually weed free, unlike Bahia grass hay, and



it also breaks down fast to help create a richer top soil. If you need a dressy look in the beds, dust a layer of pine straw on top of the hay. Acid loving plants like blueberries, azalea, gardenias and camellia like to be mulched with leaves, pine bark and pine straw. Other long term mulches that work on shrubs and trees are recycled pallet mulch and the trimmings from the trees that are pruned along the highways.

Whatever you decide on, use enough of it, it usually takes a couple of inches to do the job right. Check it in a couple of months and if you're seeing weeds popping up add another layer soon. Redressing the beds before the mulch breaks down will save you a lot of hand weeding.