

COMPOSTING PERENNIAL WEEDS

Composting troublesome weeds, like ground elder, couch grass, nettles and docks can be easy.

These weeds have large roots systems, so absorb a lot of valuable nutrients from the soil. Use all this goodness by recycling it in the garden. Don't throw it away.

Killing perennial weeds by composting takes 2 years. The roots must be starved of light for 2 years, so these plants will not be killed if they are added to a normal compost bin and left for only one year. We need to use different methods to make sure we don't spread them round our gardens.

Drowning

The quickest way to dispose of perennial weeds.

- Cram them into a bucket, roots and all.
- Fill the bucket with water and weigh down the weeds with a brick or stone so they are under the surface.
- Cover the bucket to exclude light, to stop evaporation and prevent rain making it overflow.
- Leave for 4 weeks. Even the roots of perennial weeds will then be drowned.
- Strain off the liquid and use it as a liquid feed – dilute 5 parts water to 1 part feed.
- Put the dead roots into your compost bin.



Stewing

A solution for the grass cutting season.

- Put the perennial weeds into a heavy duty black plastic bag.
- Mix in an equal quantity of fresh grass mowings.
- Tie up the neck of the bag and leave it in a sunny spot.

The heat generated by the grass mowings and the sun will turn the contents of the bag into a brown, gooey mess.

- After 3 or 4 weeks the roots will have turned to slime and the whole lot can safely be added to your compost bin.

Dessicating

There are only a few summers when you can use this simple method.

- Lay the roots of the perennial weeds, in a thin layer, on a hard, flat surface like concrete or corrugated iron to keep them off the soil.

After 2 or 3 weeks, the summer sun will dry and shrivel the roots.

- Once the roots are baked hard, they can safely be added to your compost bin.

Adding to a Compost Bin

If these methods are too much trouble, add all your perennial weeds to a special compost bin that you use just for these weeds. This should be a plastic one because it would be difficult to exclude all light from a wooden box.

Keep it covered and leave for 2 complete years to rot down.

When using the compost, check that there are no living roots left: healthy ground elder and couch grass roots are white and nettle yellow.

DO NOT USE THIS METHOD FOR HORSETAIL (*Equisetum arvense*), LESSER CELANDINE (*Ranunculus ficaria*), BINDWEED (*Calystegia sepium*) or JAPANESE KNOTWEED (*Fallopia japonica*).

Horsetail, Bindweed and Lesser Celandine can be drowned or stewed but leave them “cooking” for 2 months to be on the safe side.

Japanese Knotweed is a notifiable contaminated substance if removed from your garden. Both the weed and the surrounding earth should be removed. Contact your local authority.

For more information on home composting or to contact us - www.askorganic.co.uk or 01450 860778

ASK Organic, in partnership with Scottish Borders Council, has a Home Composting Display within Woodside Plant Centre, by Ancrum, Jedburgh.



**Waste Aware
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For information on Waste and Recycling contact Scottish Borders Council Recycling Team on 0300 100 1800 or www.scotborders.gov.uk/recycling

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