

COMPOSTING PERENNIAL WEEDS

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

These weeds have large roots systems, so they absorb a lot of valuable nutrients from the soil.

Use all this goodness by recycling it on your plot - 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. Different methods need to be used to make sure we don't spread them round the allotment.

Drowning

The quickest way to dispose of perennial weeds is:

- 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 good solution during 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, if the sun shines continually.

- 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 roots are 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 the allotment, and must only be disposed of on-site by burning the whole plant and roots.