

Reduce the Need to Weed
By Bridget Haworth

Would you like to reduce your need to weed? Are sick of using smelly and toxic chemicals? Perhaps you are tired of bending over just to have weeds break off with the roots still in the ground. There's no doubt about it. Weeds are prolific. However, Glenn Hymers and Brenda Heaslip find their need to weed has significantly dropped.

Weeds are a rarity in their garden but those that do appear are easily pulled out. Glenn and Brenda use copious quantities of wood chip mulch which reduces weed growth in their garden. Glenn used to hoe weeds but now says that, "Hoeing was like a never ending loop as it would promote germination of weeds while I was weeding." Mulch prevents light from shining onto bare soil thereby significantly reducing weed germination.

According to Glenn, there are many benefits to mulching beyond natural weed management. If you are looking for a way to reduce the need to water your garden in this dry climate, then the answer is mulching. Since the ground is covered with a porous cover material, water can easily flow in and yet does not evaporate as easily. As well, mulching makes for a healthy bird population because they like to scratch around to catch bugs and worms that are free of pesticides. Mulch is also effective as mud control and path definition.

As your mulch decays it needs to be replaced. Glenn has been mulching for 20 years and for the last 10 years it has been easier because he has a steady supply from Craik's town mulching program. However, he does admit that one of the drawbacks is the amount of time it takes to establish a good thick bed of mulch. However, the work is fairly easy compared to hoeing and healthier than spreading chemicals. Although Glenn has not had a problem with disease importation from mulching with wood chips, this could be a problem if not monitored closely.

There are many types of mulch and or covering materials. Wood chips, shredded newspaper or cardboard are commonly used because they are easy to obtain at little to no cost. These items are often part of the waste stream therefore when you use them you are also reducing the amount of waste that goes to the landfill or has to be transported to a recycling facility. In essence you become the recycling facility as these products decay and become food for your plants.