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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## CONTROLLING WEEDS IN THE GARDEN

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Many of you may have noticed this year that the garden is off to a late start after the cool wet spring we enjoyed. But like my garden, the weeds were not notified and seem to have a head start. Well, help is available through the use of the following techniques:

**A thick layer of organic mulch** will keep moisture from evaporating and hinder germination of weed seeds. Mulch will also add organic matter to your soil which will produce a better crop for the next season. (If you use grass clippings make sure an herbicide has not been used, as it can damage garden plants.) Your mulch material should be weed seed free. Examples of materials for mulching include straw, leaves, peat moss, bark, newspaper and herbicide-free grass clippings.

**Pulling weeds by hand** can be a tough job but as you weed you can observe problems in your garden. Weeding also gives you a firsthand look at garden pests. As you are pulling weeds, keep a seed packet handy. This is a good opportunity to plant some fall vegetables. If the weeds are growing well it might be a good spot for other plants.

**Close Spacing of plants** can be a big help because it shades the soil so weeds will not be able to germinate. Adding new plants to an area that will be harvested soon will help to use all available space.

**Cultivation** involves tilling scraping or raking the soil to destroy young weeds. However, cultivation can damage soil structure if done too frequently. Hoeing is very helpful and can reduce weeds in large areas.

**Cover crops** can be planted after harvest and turned over into the soil. This will help reduce weeds and improve soil structure and there are many species from which to choose.

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**Herbicides** can be a great time saver if used properly. Herbicides must be used according to label directions. Improper use of herbicides can hinder plant growth and damage existing garden plants.

Enjoy your time in the garden this season and hopefully some these tips will give you an advantage over the weeds.

*Barbara Wilson has been a University of Idaho Master Gardener in Bonner County since 2009.*

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