

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcast. Today's episode is all about the war of the weeds. Weeds are a fact of life. If you have a homestead or a garden of any kind, but you don't have to reach for those toxic herbicides that are not so great for you or your soil. Stay tuned for some of my very best all natural weed fighting tips. I'm your host Jill winger and for the last 10 years I have been helping people just like you who feel a little uninspired by modern life. I'll show you how to leave the rat race and create the life you really want by learning how to grow your own food and master old fashioned skills. I have to start this episode with a little bit of a funny back story because I am well known as an organic all natural girl from my love of essential oils for everything to organic gardening and homesteading.
- Speaker 1: [01:12](#) I am, you know the person online who loves all things organic, but it wasn't always that way. In fact, growing up, my dad worked as a farm chemical salesman and I even believe the company he worked for was owned by a subsidiary of Monsanto. So they were actually connected to Monsanto in some way, which if you've ever googled that or seen anything online, you know Monsanto is very, very controversial, but he sold roundup and every sort of chemical you can imagine that farmers would spray on their fields for herbicides or pesticides. Even to the point where all of our coffee cups growing up or emblazoned with Chemical Logos because my dad would get coffee cups, his gifts or you know, they would come in from the supplier and he'd bring them home. So we had all these chemical names on our coffee cups that even occasionally they'd give us a knife set that had a logo on it.
- Speaker 1: [02:22](#) So really funny considering that's where I'm from and where I ended up. But that being said, I don't like using chemicals on our homestead. I refuse to use roundup even when the grass drives me crazy in my driveway. I just would rather opt out of all those things. That does leave me with weeds, especially in my garden and I know that you guys can relate to this, but weeds take a lot of our time as gardeners and homesteaders and I personally don't have three hours a day that I can spend in the garden keeping up with the weeds and I'm guessing that you don't either. Over the years I've come up with some different strategies that I employ to keep weeds to a minimum. Now I'm not going to say that this banishes every weed in the whole world because I don't even think that's possible, but there are things you can do to reduce the number of hours a day or week that you have to be outside pulling weeds on your hands and knees.

- Speaker 1: [03:36](#) I want to walk through some of my favorite strategies today. Some of these are strategies I'm using right now as we speak, and other ones are things I've had on my list to try or have just been in my awareness of options that are out there. But I wanted to give you all sorts of ideas whether I've tried them or not, that you can go do a bit more research on and maybe implement them in your own situation. I want to start off by saying there is a couple things you can do to just prevent weeds from coming back and proliferating to start with. A big one to keep in mind, and this might be easier said than done, is just to be mindful of your cultivation. The weed seeds, you know, are kind of always in the soil. And as we cultivate that soil or till it up or continually till it up year after year, we're bringing those weed seeds to the surface over and over again.
- Speaker 1: [04:42](#) And that's why there are some definite advantages to this idea of no till gardening, right where you do minimal tilling or no tilling it all. You just layer things on there. And the idea behind that is once you pick or deal with all that weed seed amount on that first layer, you're never going to bring the bottom layers of seeds up to the surface. Now I realized there's lots of gardening methods and sometimes tilling makes sense. Um, I did try no till methods back when I was doing deep mulch and I have a whole episode on that and why I don't do it anymore. But I think there's definitely merit to that idea or at the very least if you are cultivating portions of your garden, maybe consider the areas where you don't have to till it, whether that's walkways or edging or so on.
- Speaker 1: [05:37](#) But be mindful of that and know that there are dormant weed seeds in that soil and try to leave them deep if you can. And another little side note that, and this is a partial current weeds strategy and partially a preventative weed strategy, but if you have certain weeds you're struggling with year after year, especially really big ones that are very determined, make sure they never go to seed. And I like to do what I call exhausting the weed. And I don't do this on my little weeds, but there are certain plants that grow on our homestead. For example, yellow dock is really frustrating for me because we don't have like tons of it, but the yellow dock I do have, I can not kill, I cannot dig it up. And I try and I try and I've dug to China trying to get to the root and I just can't get it out.
- Speaker 1: [06:34](#) I have a couple spots in my raised bed garden walkways where the dock comes up over and over again. I can't dig it up. So what I do instead is I am constantly cutting or pulling it down to the ground level. And I never, never, never let it get seeds of any kind on there. And that's really important. As you're weeding or

even in areas of your yard where you might not be paying as close attention, you know, on borders or edges, make sure you don't have big old weeds over there that are getting healthy seed pods and getting ready to release them into the world. That's just going to cause so much headache for you. And I know it's really easy. One of my focuses on my vegetable gardens or my flower beds to kind of ignore what's happening on the edges of my homestead.

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And I think a lot of my weed seeds can come from those areas. So keep that in mind. Careful cultivation, making sure that you're never letting anything go to seed that will give you a good headstart. Those are some strategies to stop weeds from starting in the first place. But what about the areas of your garden that you're already actively battling? You know, a consistent weed invasion. My number one all time favorite tip for that, which is not a new concept, but I want to underscore it again is mulch. Like I mentioned a few minutes ago, I've been involved in the deep mulch method for several years. I don't do it actively anymore, but I have lots of information on my blog and in the podcast episodes previously about that whole venture. But even though I don't follow that official Ruth Stout deep mulch right now, I still am using mulch in my raised beds.

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Currently what I'm using for mulch material is grass clippings. We got an industrial mower because we live on the prairie and there's a lot of grass and you know, sometimes people criticize the idea of grass or lawns, but for us grass is native and natural and it needs to be cut just for a tidiness sake. We have an Mower, and we mow the grass and it captures the clippings and I'm able to use those as mulch there. It's fantastic mulch. It's fine and it's easy to work with. And I have really loved having that. You have to be careful if you are in town or getting grass clippings from another source. Be very, very, very mindful the clippings have not been sprayed with some sort of herbicide cause that will potentially cause havoc in your garden. So the grass clippings must be completely clean and organic, if you will, but as long as you can be sure of that.

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They're really nice. I love mulching with them. Um, I mulch several beds that had more mature seedlings before. We went on vacation a couple of weeks ago. And when I came home, the beds that had not been mulched were absolute disaster. And the beds that had been mulched were really pretty darn good. I had a few weeds I had to pluck from those beds, but it wasn't out of control. I was really, really happy with the results. The key is to make sure you're using enough mulch to really smother anything underneath. And I always, always weed before I mulch

so it doesn't work so hot. If you have larger weeds and you're trying to smush them down with the Mulch, haven't had good results with that cause they're pretty resilient and they'll poke right back up through. So give everything a good weed, mulch it generously, and it will go a long way in reducing your workload.

Speaker 1: [10:35](#) Beyond grass clippings, there are definite other options for mulch. Straw is one, if you can get it, it's a good option. Also leaves. If you have a lot of leaves in your area, we do not because the wind blows them all away. So I don't ever really get to use leaves. But I know some areas of the country have plenty. You can use hay. Even though I know that some people just lose their minds when you, they hear the words, hay mulch. But that's actually what I used when I was deep mulching. And as long as your layer is thick enough and deep enough, it should feasibly smother out the hayseeds so you shouldn't have any germination. Now if you are planning on just putting a shallow layer of Mulch, I would not recommend using hay, only use it as if you know it has not been sprayed with any sort of herbicide.

Speaker 1: [11:31](#) And you know that you can use a good hefty layer to keep those hayseeds at bay. Now organic mulches are great if you need a little more oomph, newspaper can be something you add into your mulch routine. That'll give you a little more bang for your buck. The trick for us is I don't get the newspaper and I don't really know anybody who gets the daily newspaper. So it's hard for me to find them. I suppose if I went to the recycling center, maybe I could beg for some or I make friends with somebody who gets newspaper every day. So I just don't have a lot of it. But if you have access to a lot of newspaper, you can lay it over the top of your garden or if you already have mature plants, lay it around the mature plants, wet it down so it doesn't blow away.

Speaker 1: [12:24](#) And then add your organic mulch on top of the newspaper, whether it's woodchips or hay or grass clippings and that will just smother out the weed seeds a little more thoroughly. This is also an option if you have flower beds or shrubs, let's say along your house and you're struggling with weeds, you know, put your newspaper down and then cover it with landscape bark or wood chips. Newspaper is going to last a year or two before it decomposes. So it's not a permanent option, but it works well. You could also use landscape fabric, um, that works. It's a little pricier. You're not going to be able to get it for free, but as long as you're laying it out, I find it's a little frustrating to try to cut it around existing plants. But if you have just an open garden plot, landscape fabric should go down pretty quickly.

Speaker 1: [13:20](#) Okay. So those are a few of the strategies I have used and are currently using. I want to talk about a few options that I haven't used yet, but they sound kind of cool. I have to throw these out here. If you've tried these, you've got to leave a comment on my Facebook or Instagram and tell me how it's worked for you. Okay, so there's two things. First off is flame weeding and this is just as cool as it sounds. You get a tool called a flame weeder, which is like a torch thing and you can burn the weeds down to ground level. Um, now I think this works best on smaller weeds. You're going to have to take a lot of precautions that you don't catch anything on fire. You know, we're pretty dry and crunchy here in the late summer, so I had to be very mindful that I didn't burn down the prairie.

Speaker 1: [14:09](#) But it'll kind of scorch the weeds down and you're not down there trying to pick them on your hands and knees. So pretty cool. I would not use this method in my vegetable garden. I would probably only use it on the edges of our yard or if you have sidewalks or walkways or, or whatever. But it's an option. Pretty cool if you want to look into it. Another cool thing I just recently discovered was the idea of bind weed mites. Now this is actually a specific to a certain type of weed, bind weed. If you don't know what bind weed is, you are a lucky, lucky person cause it is got to be one of the worst weeds in existence. We struggle with it every single year. It's almost impossible to kill the roots go deep, deep into the ground. It's this vine and I, from what I've read, even if a small chunk of vine, um, is in the soil or even in a compost pile, it can come back from that little tiny piece.

Speaker 1: [15:11](#) The seeds lasts for decades in the soil. You can't pull it out by the roots, it will choke your plants and kind of wind around your good plants and choke them down. It's just nasty stuff and we have a lot of it. So I pull it and pull it and pull it. And I always burn it once I pull it out because I don't want to put it in my compost pile, but I'm trying to find different options to deal with it. And there is a bug called or an insect rather called a bind weed mite that you can get from some extension agencies across the country depending on your state. And apparently this insect lives and you know, uses bind weed as a host and eventually it will weaken and kill the vine, the bind weed, it's not instantaneous, it takes about a year or two. But I'm willing to try anything at this point. So I'm going to see if I can find some mites and they're apparently been approved so they're not going to be like an invasive species that would hurt other insects in the area. So it sounds like they're, they're safe, but if I can find some, I'm gonna try them and see if it helps. Because at this point I am pretty desperate and if you're listening and you

have bind weed tips, definitely send them my way because I'm willing to try almost anything at this point.

Speaker 1: [16:33](#)

Now kind of following up with this idea of ideas I've heard of and haven't tried, there's also this concept of soil solarization, which is basically baking your soil in the sun. Now you have to use some sort of plastic to intensify this process and a lot of people recommend it. To be honest, I was really gung Ho to try it, this spring and I started reading that it can actually not only kill off any bad bacteria or organisms in your soil. It can also be harmful to the good ones. So I didn't want to mess up the balance of my soil, so I haven't tried it yet. But I think if you were at a point where you were desperate, you had a horrible weed infestation and an area of your garden, or you had some sort of plant disease in the soil that you couldn't get rid of, this would be a measure you could definitely take.

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So here's soil solarization in a nutshell. You basically take a plot of land that you want to purge. You till it up, dig it up, whatever, get rid of the rocks or clumps, kind of make it smooth, level it out, and then soak it completely with, so it's, it's very wet, like several feet down. Then you take a plastic, and I've heard black plastic is best and you stretch it over the top. Sometimes you might even need two layers of plastic, stretch it over the top, make sure all the edges are anchored down, whether you're kind of digging it under and, and putting it under the soil and then mounting soil on top or using rocks or steaks, you want it to be well anchored. And then you leave it for a long time. That's kind of the downfall of this method is it that plastics gotta be on the soil a lengthy period of time.

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If you live in a very hot part of the country such as the south, I've heard that it's around six to eight weeks at a minimum that you must leave the plastic on the soil. If you're in a cooler area like us, the northern part of the country, you have to leave the plastic on all season like six to eight months during a hot and sunny summer. That's a long time. So for me, if I did that, I would lose an entire growing season. And when I started to weigh the pros and cons, losing a growing season really wasn't worth that. I don't have that many weeds in my beds to justify skipping a whole season. Now I might try this on an area of my garden. I have a walkway where I'll never plant vegetables. It's just a walkway. And I've done bark and landscape fabric there and I still have bind weed issues. So I'm considering trying this plastic concept over the top of that. They won't be able to till it first but just see if it will kind of scorched the bind weed, uh, or help in some way, shape or form. So that's where I'm going to try it first and then maybe potentially use it other places, but

I'm a little bit leery of just solarizing my entire garden. And I think if you're considering it, you really need to be looking at the pros and cons before you dive in.

Speaker 1: [19:53](#) Just to summarize where we've been so far, we've talked about ways to prevent weeds and get rid of existing weeds and some cool weed techniques out there. And to wrap up this episode, I want to share my favorite homemade spray for weeds. I do not use roundup, like I stated before, not a fan. And most of the time I'm dealing with weeds by either pulling them or mulching them or you know, all these other methods. But occasionally spraying makes sense. And the areas that I am prone to spray are mostly like in our driveway, around the edges of our lawn and walkways and so on. I don't use sprays in my garden because there's too much of a risk of the spray getting on my good plants. So this is more of an application where you're just trying to like annihilate the weeds in your driveway or whatever.

Speaker 1: [20:50](#) But this is what I would do. Vinegar because it's acidic can be a good option for homemade weed sprays. You can get what is called horticultural vinegar, which is way stronger, far more caustic, and that's going to do the job a little bit more quickly. The downfalls of horticultural vinegar, it's more expensive, it's harder to find and it is caustic. So you have to be really careful handling it. You can either find that or you can just grab a gallon of the cheap white vinegar at the store and use that. It's not going to kill things quite as quickly, but it'll still get the job done. Now with your gallon of vinegar, you're gonna pour it in a bucket or a bowl and dissolve in one cup of Epsom salts into this vinegar and then add a squirt of dish soap and pour it into a sprayer.

Speaker 1: [21:51](#) You can then spray this salt vinegar mixture on any weeds you want to kill. I would recommend like if you're dealing with weeds and a driveway that you weed whack them or mow them down short first and then spray them. It's going to take a lot longer if you're spraying a huge plant with lots of leaves. And then wait, you know, as long as it's hot and dry, the vinegar should start taking effects pretty quickly. If it rains in between sprays, you know, reapply as needed. Now be very, very careful though with this because since it has salt in it, once salt goes into the soil, things aren't going to grow there. So if this is why I would not use the spray in my garden, it's only gonna be an areas where I want nothing to grow. Um, you could also leave the salt out if you're concerned.

Speaker 1:

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And just use the vinegar. It might take a little bit longer, but it should work decently well in the same time period. So to wrap everything up, non chemical weeding is a continual process and you have to be committed to it. So figure out your strategies, put together your arsenal of weed fighting weapons and you will see a reduction in the weeds if you're consistent. As long as we use these natural tools and get creative, I am totally convinced that we do not have to use those nasty sprays or roundup or whatever in our beautiful organic gardens. So if you're ready to do this homestead thing, you're feeling inspired and ready to go, but you're not quite sure where to start. Well, that's my specialty. I just so happen to have a whole library of resources I put together for homesteaders just like you. And you can get complimentary access to this at theprairiehomestead.com/growgrow and that's it. If you have just a minute, I would be so honored to have you subscribe to the old fashioned on purpose podcast and leave me a quick review over on iTunes so more people can find it and bring home setting into their lives. Thanks for listening and I'll catch up with you next time. Happy homesteading.