

The Beauty of Weeds

From the beginning of spring to the end of summer and through late fall, many gardeners can attest to the fact that their landscape is filled with weeds. Most often, we find ourselves picking, pulling and yes, spraying weeds. But, how often have you gazed across your garden and thought that I'm so thankful for these weeds in my garden? Well, despite our desire to rid our landscape of weeds, there is a unique beauty in weeds and potentially a place for them in the garden.

Here are some weeds that are not only beautiful but also beneficial to our gardens:

Clover – One of the more prolific weeds smattered throughout most gardens, clover brings nitrogen back into depleted soil by hosting nitrogen-stabilizing bacteria in its roots. Clover also serves as a benefit to the garden by stabilizing the moisture around their roots. It has beautiful flower and soft to step on.

Ground Ivy – If you grow cucumbers, squash, melons, tomatoes, broccoli brussels sprouts and cauliflower, ground ivy is good to have around. Although not scientifically proven, it may help to repel certain garden insects. Ground ivy is also used in herbal tea and is high in vitamin C.

Japanese Knotweed – This plant can quickly run rampant in your garden. So, don't intentionally plant this in your garden. But you can show it who's boss by simply eating it. It is compared to rhubarb and attracts butterflies and other beneficial insects. If you do decide to eat it, just break off the new shoots and the top four inches of the larger plants and sauté or grill it like asparagus.

Dandelion – As kids, many of us remember picking dandelions and blowing their seeds into the air. Dandelions potentially have much to offer. Their tap roots help to break up hardened soil and lift nutrients from deep down all while benefiting plants that have a weaker or more shallow roots. Their young tender leaves are not only edible but delicious in salads with a high nutritional content.

Wild Vetch – Vetch is a great green manure and cover crop. Since it can grow very tall, it is best to let it grow in between crops. Vetch is a great companion plant for peppers, cabbage, brassica and other plants that have a high nitrogen requirement because it fixes nitrogen in the soil. Vetch also provides a ground cover for predatory beetles.

So, while many plants that are still classified as weeds get a bad rap because of their ability to quickly cultivate barren soil, consider the multi-purpose they may provide in your garden or lawn. There may be more there than what immediately meets the eye. For instance, once you get to know them, many can give you hints about the condition of your soil. Weeds potentially have a lot to offer in terms of creating a healthy garden or a great meal.

Disclaimer: While it is true that some weeds are edible, you are highly encouraged to do your research about the pros and cons of such before consuming.