

**2024**

## **Hatfield Community Garden Weed Management**

Originally, we used the 3-bin method of composting to manage our weeds, on a community-wide basis, with limited results. It was a lot of work, and the bins were too small to handle the vast amount of weeds produced in our garden.

Our next method was to toss everything into a huge pile behind the shed and forget about it. This resulted in waste of good organic material which would ideally have been returned to our garden to enrich the soil and improve soil structure. It was noted as an eyesore, and it soon became so large as to be unmanageable. There was talk of paying someone to haul it away.

We discussed this situation at our January meeting and it was decided that we would try the trench method to deal with the existing weed pile, on a one-time basis. We hope to accomplish this in early April during a work day. More about the specifics of trench composting later.

We will no longer allow weeds and other organic material to be placed in a pile behind the shed. All gardeners will be responsible for managing their own weeds. Any invasive weeds should be placed in plastic bags and removed from the garden. This is considered trash and needs to be disposed of properly into your household waste stream.

There are three methods of weed Management available to us in 2024. Sheet composting, wire cage composting, and trench composting. You are free to choose any of these methods as long as you do it within your own plot. We will no longer be making community weed piles or composting on a community-wide scale. Madelyn Young will be available to provide help and instructions to any gardener who needs assistance.

### Wire Cages

The community garden will purchase chicken wire and posts and make wire cages for each gardener who chooses this method of weed management.

We encourage all gardeners to create their own compost using wire cages in their plots. This is the easiest, most straightforward method of managing weeds. Simply toss the weeds into your wire cage and let nature take its course. The following Spring, simply pick up the wire cage and place it in a new spot in your plot. Spread the previous year's decomposed weeds onto your planting bed and either dig it into the soil to mix it in or simply leave it as a top layer mulch around your plants.

### Trench

This method involves digging a trench, 2 ft deep and 2 ft across. Weeds are then placed into the trench to a depth of 12 inches. The soil from digging the trench is then used to cover the weeds, leaving a small mound. As the weeds decompose, the mound will gradually level off leaving a flat surface.

### Sheet composting

This method involves placing weeds on the surface of the soil between planting rows. The material decomposes in place and is slowly incorporated into the soil. While it is decomposing, the material adds nutrients to nearby plants, discourages weed seeds from germinating by blocking the sun, and acts as a mulch to decrease moisture evaporation.

Managing the old weed pile behind the shed:

This year we will be removing the material from the existing weed pile behind the shed. The top most weeds, which have not had an opportunity to decompose, will be transported to a trench which will be dug along the Northern border of the community garden between the garden and Bardwell Farm. The bottom of the pile, which is made up of weeds deposited in previous years, and which have had the opportunity to decompose, will be spread as mulch around existing plants in the memorial plot.