

## COMPOSTING PERENNIAL WEEDS ON YOUR ALLOTMENT

Composting troublesome weeds, like ground elder, couch grass, nettles and docks can be easy. These weeds have large roots systems, so absorb a lot of valuable nutrients from the soil. Use all this goodness by recycling it on your plot. Don't throw it away.

Killing perennial weeds by composting takes 2 years. The roots must be starved of light for 2 years, so these plants will not be killed if they are added to a normal compost bin and left for only one year. We need to use different methods to make sure we don't spread them round our plot.

### Drowning

The quickest way to dispose of perennial weeds.

- Cram them into a bucket, roots and all.
- Fill the bucket with water and weigh down the weeds with a brick or stone so they are under the surface.
- Cover the bucket to exclude light, to stop evaporation and prevent rain making it overflow. Leave for 4 weeks. Even the roots of perennial weeds will then be drowned.
- Strain off the liquid and use it as a liquid feed – dilute 5 parts water to 1 part feed.
- Put the dead roots into your compost bin.

### Stewing

A solution for the grass cutting season.

- Put the perennial weeds into a heavy duty black plastic bag.
- Mix in an equal quantity of fresh grass mowings.
- Tie up the neck of the bag and leave it in a sunny spot.

The heat generated by the grass mowings and the sun will turn the contents of the bag into a brown, gooey mess.

- After 3 or 4 weeks the roots will have turned to slime and the whole lot can safely be added to your compost bin.

### Dessicating

There are only a few summers when you can use this simple method.

- Lay the roots of the perennial weeds, in a thin layer, on a hard, flat surface like concrete or corrugated iron to keep them off the soil.

After 2 or 3 weeks, the summer sun will dry and shrivel the roots.

- Once the roots are baked hard, they can safely be added to your compost bin.

### Adding to a Compost Bin

If these methods are too much trouble, add all your perennial weeds to a special compost bin that you use just for these weeds. This should be a plastic one because it would be difficult to exclude all light from a wooden box.

Keep it covered and leave for 2 complete years to rot down.

When using the compost, check that there are no living roots left: healthy ground elder and couch grass roots are white and nettle yellow.

DO NOT USE THIS METHOD FOR HORSETAIL (*Equisetum arvense*), LESSER CELANDINE (*Ranunculus ficaria*), BINDWEED (*Calystegia sepium*) or JAPANESE KNOTWEED (*Fallopia japonica*).

Source: Ask Organic