

Here's why we should stop weeding. Learn to love our dandelions and brambles

Level 1: Elementary / Pre-Intermediate

1 Warmer

- a. Find the words in the wordpool in the wordsearch puzzle below. Then look them up in a dictionary and match them to their meanings.

bindweed

bramble

dandelion

dock

thistle

v	d	c	i	c	d	k	c	h	o
x	f	a	z	w	o	c	a	b	x
t	b	o	n	j	c	z	z	n	n
h	c	i	u	d	k	p	z	x	z
i	p	e	n	n	e	d	t	z	n
s	c	x	f	d	l	l	r	e	d
t	a	k	o	m	w	h	i	f	l
l	l	g	z	y	s	e	n	o	q
e	y	t	d	t	v	f	e	b	n
b	r	a	m	b	l	e	u	d	g

- _____ : a wild plant with a thick round purple or white flower and leaves with sharp points. It is often used as a symbol of Scotland.
- _____ : a wild plant with large leaves
- _____ : a wild plant with a large yellow flower that changes into a furry white ball of seeds called a "clock"
- _____ : a wild plant that grows among other plants and winds itself around them
- _____ : a bush with thin sharp points on its long branches, especially one that produces blackberries

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2 Key words

- a. Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text. Then complete the example sentences with the same words.

buffet

evidence

hero

invertebrates

resource

1. A _____ is someone who has done something good for others.
The book is about Alex, a 13-year-old _____ who saves the world.
2. _____ is the facts or physical signs that help to prove something.
There is _____ to show that there is more rain in places where there are more trees.
3. A _____ is something that you can use to help you get something, especially in your work or study.
The university has a big library and useful online _____.
4. A _____ is a meal at which all the food is put on a table, and people go and choose what they want.
After the wedding, there was a _____ and live music.
5. _____ are tiny animals without a backbone, for example, an insect or a worm.
He studies earthworms and other types of _____.

appearance

bare

damaged

soil

thorns

6. _____ is the substance on the surface of the Earth in which plants grow.
Most plants need _____, sunlight, and water to grow.
7. _____ trees or areas of land have nothing growing on them.
When they bought the land, it was _____, but now there are fruit trees and vegetables.
8. If something is _____, it is harmed physically so that it is broken, spoiled, or injured.
There was a fire and many rooms in the house were _____.

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9. _____ is the way that someone or something looks.

Apples and pears are similar in _____, but apples are rounder.

10. _____ are sharp points that stick out from the stem of a plant.

Be careful when you cut the flowers. They have sharp _____.

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Alys Fowler

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- 1 The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) has said that the 2023 Chelsea Flower Show is all about weeds but not as we know them. Four of its 12 show gardens will have plants that were called weeds before. They are now being called "heroes" and "strong plants". Weeds are no longer flowers in the wrong place but exactly where they should be.
- 2 There is more evidence now that weeds are doing much more than using up resources – they are giving back. Many of our weeds are parts of the food web. They flower at the right time of year to be important givers of pollen and nectar for pollinators and food for other insects. Weeds, as the RHS says, are strong; they flower repeatedly in all kinds of weather and grow in poor soils. They are a buffet that is always open to invertebrates.
- 3 Weeds feed the soil too. Many weeds have deep roots that break up soils and take out minerals and nutrients, leaving them back on the soil surface as their leaves die. Weeds are often the first protection for bare soil. They protect the top layers of soil that are so necessary for life, so easily damaged if left empty. Weeds cover, build and feed our soil system as they grow.
- 4 Ecologists, gardeners and all kinds of plant growers have been giving these reasons to love weeds, but not designers. They care about appearance, so it's quite a change for them to use weeds suddenly.
- 5 Everyone can learn to love some daisy flowers, but what about other weeds? Can you learn to love them too?
- 6 Yes, I think so. They all have uses. Brambles' thorns are homes to the songbirds trying to hide from the cat; there are flowers for the bees and berries we eat. Some are less easy to love, like bindweed, but it is insect food.
- 7 Our natural areas are in danger, and our gardens are part of the solution. It is best if our gardens are natural, with many different spaces for things to live in.

- 8 Spend time looking at weeds as plants, and you will see that each has a beauty to it. They just need care, like all the other plants in your garden.
- 9 I never thought I'd write this: listen to the designers and stop pulling out weeds. Leave space for weeds.

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Glossary

pollen: a powder produced by flowers. It is carried by the wind or insects to other flowers so that they can produce new seeds.

pollinator: an insect or other animal that places pollen from one flower on another flower to help it to produce seed

nectar: a sweet liquid that some flowers make and that insects and birds drink

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3 Comprehension check

a. Are the statements True (T) or False (F) according to the article? Correct any that are false.

1. Some of the 2023 Chelsea Flower Show's gardens have weeds.
2. Weeds only use up the resources around them. They don't give anything back.
3. Weeds are important because they give insects and other animals food, nectar and pollen.
4. Weeds don't grow very quickly.
5. Weeds are bad for the soil because they break it up.
6. Until now, designers didn't like weeds very much.
7. The writer thinks that we can learn to love all weeds.
8. Weeds that grow in gardens don't need care like other plants.

4 Key language

a. Choose the correct preposition to complete each phrase from the article.

1. Weeds are no longer flowers *in / on* the wrong place
2. They flower repeatedly, *in / on* all kinds of weather, and grow *in / on* poor soils.
3. Weeds take out minerals and nutrients, leaving them back *in / on* the soil surface as their leaves die.
4. Our natural areas are *in / on* danger, and our gardens are part of the solution.
5. It is best if our gardens are natural, with many different plants for things to live *in / on*.
6. They just need care, like all the other plants *in / on* your garden.

b. Fill in the gaps with the correct preposition.

1. You should not go swimming _____ bad weather.
2. Bees are _____ danger.
3. There is a large orange tree _____ the garden.
4. Look! There are worms _____ the surface of the soil.
5. Many birds live _____ trees.
6. You should plant tomatoes _____ a sunny place.

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5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- "To garden is to fight nature."
- "Everyone should stop weeding."
- "All plants are beautiful, and weeds are beautiful too."

6 In your own words

a. Create a guide of a weed that grows where you live. You can use an app or online resources to identify it. Complete the table below with information about the plant you choose.

	Weed:
drawing / image	
different parts of the plant (roots, stem, flowers, other)	
where it grows (soil, light, water)	
which insects and animals live around it	
other information	
how/where you imagine it in a garden	

b. Report your findings to the class.