

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

## Level 3: Advanced

### 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. Find the missing words in the text. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

1. If something is \_\_\_\_\_, it can quickly become healthy, happy or strong again after an illness, disappointment or other problem. (paragraph 1)
2. If something is \_\_\_\_\_, it is intended to destroy the power or influence of a government or an established belief. (paragraph 2)
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is a powder produced by flowers. It is carried by the wind or insects to other flowers so that they can produce new seeds. (paragraph 3)
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is a sweet liquid that some flowers make and that insects and birds drink. (paragraph 3)
5. An \_\_\_\_\_ is a small animal without a backbone, for example, an insect or a worm. (paragraph 3)
6. A \_\_\_\_\_ plant lasts for more than two growing seasons. (paragraph 4)
7. To \_\_\_\_\_ is to put or leave something somewhere. (paragraph 4)
8. To \_\_\_\_\_ is to gradually damage the surface of rock or land so that it begins to disappear or be progressively damaged. (paragraph 4)
9. To \_\_\_\_\_ is to say unpleasant things about someone or something, usually unfairly. (paragraph 4)
10. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a small hole or space. (paragraph 8)
11. If something or someone is \_\_\_\_\_, they are big, beautiful, or impressive in a calm and serious way. (paragraph 9)
12. To \_\_\_\_\_ is to take care of someone or something. (paragraph 9)
13. To \_\_\_\_\_ is to remove parts of a tree or plant, for example, to make it grow better. (paragraph 9)

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b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity. You might have to change the form of the word.

1. She studies and writes about spiders, worms, and other \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Peonies are \_\_\_\_\_ flowers that go dormant in the winter and bloom every spring.
3. Cauliflower, a long- \_\_\_\_\_ vegetable, is making a comeback.
4. I love basil, and I have tried to keep some on my windowsill, but without success; it is not a very \_\_\_\_\_ plant.
5. Mangrove forests can help prevent coastal areas from \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Storage spaces usually offer plenty of well-hidden \_\_\_\_\_ for house spiders.
7. Paramedics have arrived and are \_\_\_\_\_ the injured.
8. A fungi network processes and \_\_\_\_\_ nutrients in the soil so other plants can absorb them.
9. Her latest novel is controversial, but it has been praised and described as \_\_\_\_\_ by critics.
10. I suffer from allergies in the spring when there is a lot of \_\_\_\_\_ in the air.
11. I \_\_\_\_\_ our lavender twice a year and remove all dead stems.
12. Have you ever seen a giraffe in the wild? It is such a beautiful and \_\_\_\_\_ animal.
13. Ants, bats, and sunbirds all feed on \_\_\_\_\_.

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#### ***Weeds protect the soil and nurture insects and birds – now they are finally having their time in the sun at the Chelsea Flower Show***

Alys Fowler

26 April, 2023

- 1 The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) has declared that the 2023 Chelsea Flower Show is all about weeds but not as we know them. Four of its 12 show gardens will feature plants traditionally regarded as weeds, which are now being rebranded as “resilient” and “heroes”. Weeds are no longer flowers in the wrong place, according to this year’s organisers, but exactly where they should be, softening the designer’s edge and adding a wild note to far corners.
- 2 Except it’s not really new: wild things have been creeping into Chelsea for many years now. Just ask Mary Reynolds, the Irish environmentalist and author whose gold-winning show garden in 2002 was noted for its “subversive use of weeds”, plants that she is still very much using today in her design work.
- 3 This championing of the humble weed by the RHS comes in the face of mounting evidence that weeds are doing far more than taking up resources – they are giving back. Many of our weeds are intricate parts of the food web. They flower at the right time of year to be important sources of pollen and nectar for pollinators, and their leaves, roots and seeds act as larval food for other insects. Weeds, as the RHS notes, are resilient by nature; they often flower repeatedly, whatever the weather, and will grow in poor, thin, baked, compacted and made-of-pure-rubble soils. They are a buffet that is always open and readily available to invertebrates, unlike more highly bred plants that have lost their nectar and pollen sources to larger or multiple petals, deeper scents or different colours. Too often, this breeding for our eyes or our tastebuds is to the detriment of the wider food web.
- 4 Weeds feed the soil too. Many perennial weeds have deep root systems that break up compacted soils and mine the subsoil layers for minerals and nutrients, depositing them on the soil surface as their leaves die back. Annual weeds are often the first flush of protection for bare soil, their quick lifecycles timed perfectly to protect the critical biologically active top layers of soil so necessary for life, so easily damaged and eroded by weather if left bare. Though much-maligned, weeds protect, build and feed our soil system as they grow.
- 5 Ecologists, wild gardeners, rewilders and regenerative growers have all been singing weeds’ praises for some time for all these reasons, but designers less so. Theirs is the business of aesthetics, often through control and manipulation, so for there to suddenly be a chorus of them purposely using weeds as a design tool ... well, that is a change indeed.
- 6 “But what of the beastly ones?” I hear you cry. Everyone can learn to love some daisies in their lawn, but docks, brambles, bindweed and dandelions – can you learn to love this lot?
- 7 Yes, I think you can. All have uses. The bramble’s thorns act as a protective home to the songbirds trying to hide from the cat, to say nothing of the flowers, buzzing with bees and other pollinators in midsummer and the berries we greedily pick. Some are less easy to love, like bindweed, but it is a source of pollen for insects and a food source for the convolvulus hawk-moth.
- 8 That designers are starting to use some of these plants in their show gardens, even ones that have a reputation for being difficult to control, such as brambles and thistles, is a sign that we are finally getting the message that our natural habitats are in danger at every level and that our gardens are part of the solution. They are both a habitat in their own right and a vital link to the wider, wilder ones. This is best achieved if our gardens are dynamic with many different ecological niches for things to thrive in – weeds offer up a myriad of different ways to do this without chemicals, without feeding, watering or even sowing.

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- 9 That they can be appreciated in this light and aesthetically, too, is genuinely cheering. Spend time looking at them as plants rather than weeds, and you will notice that each has a beauty to it. A drift of the rusty seedheads of dock against a backdrop of summer-blond grasses or a bank of dandelions thick in flower: these are majestic plants worthy of inclusion in designs. They just need tending, like all the other plants in your garden – mowing the dandelions before they set seed, pruning brambles as you would a berry, pulling up the seedhead of dock before they shatter.
- 10 I never thought I'd write this: let the designers, then, show you how to ease up on weeding and leave space for these valuable plants, for their time has truly come.

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### 3 Comprehension check

a. Decide if each statement is True (T), False (F), or Not Given (NG). Correct any that are false.

1. Dandelions have stolen the show at the Chelsea Flower Show this year.
2. Mary Reynolds was heavily criticised for including weeds in her 2002 garden and nearly disqualified from the show.
3. Weeds are essential for the food web because they provide larval food, nectar and pollen to insects and pollinators.
4. Weeds are known as the "heroes" of the worm world because they support worms more than any other insects.
5. Flowers intentionally bred to look a certain way often lose some other characteristics that make them beneficial to the food web.
6. Weeds' leaves feed the soil; dead leaves help prevent erosion.
7. Weeds have been appreciated for their aesthetics for decades.
8. The author thinks gardens should include weeds for living things to thrive.
9. The author says weeds should grow wild and not be tended like other plants in a garden.
10. Brambles are the author's weed of choice.

### 4 Key language

a. Complete the noun phrases from the article.

1. subversive \_\_\_\_\_ of weeds (paragraph 2)
2. in the \_\_\_\_\_ of mounting evidence (paragraph 3)
3. to the \_\_\_\_\_ of the wider food web (paragraph 3)
4. a \_\_\_\_\_ of them purposely using weeds (paragraph 5)
5. a \_\_\_\_\_ of pollen for insects (paragraph 7)
6. a \_\_\_\_\_ of different ways to do this (paragraph 8)
7. dock against a \_\_\_\_\_ of summer-blond grasses (paragraph 9)
8. plants \_\_\_\_\_ of inclusion (paragraph 9)

b. Choose five of the phrases above and use them in personalised sentences.

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### 5 Discussion

**a. Discuss these statements.**

- "Gardening is a power struggle between man and nature."
- "There are absolutely no valid reasons for weeding."
- "All plants are beautiful, and weeds are no exception."
- "The best gardens are wild gardens."

### 6 In your own words

**a. Create a field guide with at least three examples of weeds that grow where you live. You can use an app or online resources to identify them. Complete the table below with information about each plant that you choose.**

	Weed 1:	Weed 2:	Weed 3:
drawing/image			
description of roots, stems, leaves, flowers			
environment in which it grows (soil, light, water)			
insect and animal life around it			
other facts			
how/where it might be found in a garden			

**b. Report your findings.**