

10 ALTERNATIVES TO GLYPHOSATE



Slow Food®

1



Manual or mechanical weeding

Often used for small plots, manual weeding is best done when the earth is damp, so that the roots can be more easily pulled out. Mechanical weeding involves using machinery with devices for cutting or pulling that remove the parts of the plant above ground. This system is the fastest method, for example, for clearing areas alongside roads and railways or land that is fallow or hard to access.

2



Intercropping

Weeds need space to grow, and the less space you leave for them, the less these unwanted plants can spread. Beneficial relationships can also help: carrots and onions, planted next to each other, protect each other from parasites, while thyme, planted close to cabbages, helps keep the cabbage white butterfly away.

3



Mulching

Mulching reproduces what happens in nature: Foliage and other plant remains fall to the ground, forming a kind of natural carpet that blocks the light and prevents weeds from germinating. Organic and inorganic materials can be used for mulching. Organic materials include straw, grass cuttings or pieces of bark, while inorganic materials include plastic sheeting (porous or non-porous, possibly biodegradable), stones, gravel, etc.

4



Innovative products, like biostimulants and supplements

These products of natural origin are believed to give the plant greater vigor and therefore a greater ability to fight off competition from weeds. Some of the products are used to improve the soil while others are applied directly to the plants.

5



Grassing over and green manuring

The ancient but highly relevant practice of controlled grassing over and successive green manuring allows the soil to be kept in ideal conditions of fertility, structure, and health. It involves burying specific crops with the aim of preserving or increasing the soil's fertility. In fields, the crops are plowed in, while in family gardens they are usually dug in. A single species can be sown, or combinations of different species designed to achieve specific objectives.



Controlling the biological cycles of weeds

The most harmful plants are often those that reproduce most easily by seed, which is why it is necessary to be very aware of their life cycle in order to avoid their fruit becoming ripe and releasing seeds. Sometimes just a few infesting weeds along the edge of a path are enough to spread their seeds across all the neighboring fields. Stopping these plants from going to seed is often the best solution.



False seed bed

This is a very old and highly effective practice used in rural communities in many parts of the world. Just before sowing, the farmer prepares the soil and irrigates it so as to stimulate the germination of any dormant weed seeds. The weed seedlings are then removed before they can reproduce and spread more seeds in the soil. The farmer can then proceed with the actual sowing with a significant reduction in the number of weeds, meaning they can usually be controlled by hand.



Using biodiversity to protect crops: Biological control

An example? Ladybugs, along with other beetles and spiders, can be a valid alternative to chemical pesticides because they feed on plant parasites. Plants that attract them include radishes, cauliflowers and broccoli. Planting your garden with these types of vegetables can encourage the presence of these beneficial insects. In some parts of the world, carp and catfish are introduced into rice paddies so that they can feed on rotting plants, algae and insect larvae. Frogs can also be helpful in combatting pests.



Aromatic herbs

Various aromatic plants and herbs make it possible to avoid the use of pesticides: nettles, for example, naturally ward off parasites, as do garlic, thyme, sage and coriander. Mint, planted close to tomatoes, protects them from parasites, while flax flowers keep potato beetles away from potatoes. Plant and animal biodiversity contribute to encouraging the co-existence between species and improving their biological equilibrium, leading, over time, to a reduced need for chemicals to fight weeds.



...or what about not weeding at all?

Weeds are not always the enemy. In some situations, such as orchards, their presence contributes to improving the soil structure, in part by avoiding the mechanical working that can damage soil fertility.

