

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Weeds, weeds, and more weeds



The clover-like tendrils of Black medic weed entwine around the Naked Lady fronds.

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The leaves are bitter when eaten raw, but when cooked, taste like spinach or collards with a high amount of protein and fiber. It does have antibacterial qualities and is also considered a mild laxative. Bees are attracted to this plant. It makes marvelous green manure. To control black medic, it is critical to hand-weed making sure to pull out the taproot.

Many of the hillsides are experiencing a super bloom of California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*) mixed with purple vetch. Having grown up with these beautiful orange globes and vetch, when I witness them growing as natives, I am overjoyed by nature's jewelry. California poppies are the state flower of California. Purple vetch, also known as American vetch (*Vicia americana*) or hairy vetch, is a native nitrogen-fixing cover crop that our family used to feed our cattle on our ranch. It is considered a weed, but I think of it as a valuable wildflower because it is great fodder for wildlife while adding biomass to the soil. The plant attracts beneficial insects to the garden and the flowers entice bees. Growing alongside vegetables, it acts as a living mulch. Vetch is a climber to about two feet and spreads through rhizomes. To control it, cut and leave on the surface of the soil to suppress other weeds. Native Americans consumed vetch as a food and used it for poultices.

Make sure to consult a medical professional before consuming or externally applying any plant that you are unfamiliar with. Although many plants are herbs and helpful, individuals could have conditions



Without enriched soil, thistles and other weeds thrive.

that could make ingesting or topically using the plant reactive and dangerous.

Once you've managed the weeds, you will enjoy the bounty of blooms erupting in our neighborhoods.

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A hillside of California poppies and purple vetch look like Impressionistic art.