

## Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

# The Need to Weed



Pink Poseidon clematis outshines the weeds.



Santa Barbara daisies, Dutch iris, and roses.



After weeding, California poppies fill the field.

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The artichokes we enjoy on our dinner plates are also a thistle in the Asteraceae family. They have been specifically bred to be edible and tender without the spiky prickles.

In the past, I have written extensively about euphorbia, hemlock, bindweed, and black media. But most people are not familiar with pelargonium robertianum and geranium purpureum, although you may have seen it. Interestingly, geranium robertianum, a native of Europe, with its delicious musky fragrance when stepped upon, is coveted by many gardeners and foragers. Its flowers and leaves add a spicy flavor to food, and the crushed leaves are an insect repellent. It also boasts medicinal uses to lower blood sugar levels, reduce inflammation, and arrest diarrhea.

In a patch growing alone, it is a pretty groundcover; however, when it grows in mixed beds, it tends to twine and strangle plants. It is in the geranium family and is known by several names, including Herb Robert, Red Robin, and Stinky Geranium. The reason I don't cook with it derives from its common name...death come quickly. It arrived in my landscape about three years ago, probably in a potted plant or perhaps from a bird, and has spread everywhere.

A subspecies of geranium robertianum, pelargonium purpureum, known as Little Robin, is on the California Invasive Plant Council list. It doesn't possess a strong fragrance, only a very slight aroma. It is pervasive throughout California, spreading by seeds and dispersed by animal

and human activities. They both have tiny pink flowers and lobed leaves. Because I grow anemones, weeding is challenging if the plant is not blooming because their lobed leaves are very similar. It is for this reason that I weed slowly and by hand.

Can you tell the difference between a weed and a domesticated plant? Why is it necessary to weed? To maintain a healthy garden, weeding is obligatory. If you have an area that is growing only weeds, weed whacking is easiest. If you have a large landscape as I do that is filled with flowers and shrubs competing with the weeds, you'll need to weed by hand.

### Here are the reasons that weeding is crucial.

**Resource Competition:** All plants require water, nutrients, and sunlight. Weeds compete with garden plants for these resources. By removing the weeds, the plants you love are allowed to thrive.

**Aesthetic Appeal:** In my opinion, weeds make a garden look unkempt. Look at the photos in this article of my garden. Although there are hundreds of blooming flowers, the weeds have overpowered the plants, making the garden look messy.

**Disease and Pest Prevention:** Weeds harbor diseases and pests that could spread to cultivate plants. My weeds are so dense and so tall, that again, this week I received another tick bite, despite wearing protection. Reduce the risk of ticks and other infestations by removing the weeds.

**Air Circulation:** When the weeds are dense, air circulation is impeded. Mildew can occur. Free up the airflow by getting rid of the weeds.

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