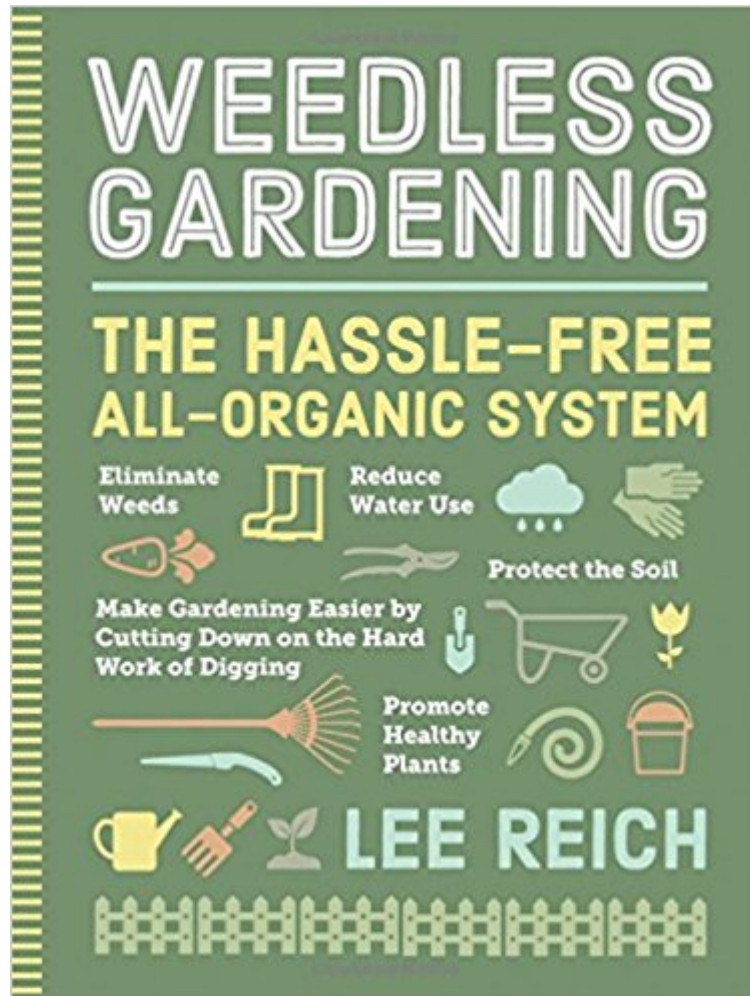




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# Weedless Gardening



## Synopsis

Conventional wisdom says to garden from the bottom up, turning over the soil every spring until your back aches. Ironically, this does such a good job aerating that gardeners spend the rest of the season pulling weeds and replacing the suddenly energized (and easily used up) nutrients. Mother nature, on the other hand, gardens from the top down-layering undisturbed soil with leaves and other organic materials. In following this example and synthesizing the work of other perceptive gardeners, Lee Reich presents a compelling new system called weedless gardening. The Weedless Garden is good for plants and it's good for people. It protects the soil, contributes to plant health, reduces water needs, cuts down on a gardener's labor, encourages earthworms and, of course, mitigates weed problems by keeping the seeds dormant. Four basic tenets form the system's backbone-minimize soil disruption; protect soil surface; avoid soil compaction; use drip irrigation-and the way to get there is simple. For a new bed or established garden, layering is key, and the perfect material to use is also among the most common-newspaper. Add organic mulch and compost on top, and plants are growing in rich, self-generating humus. From vegetable gardening to flower gardens to planting trees, shrubs, and vines, The Weedless Garden works everywhere-allowing the gardener to work quite a bit less.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"There's no such thing," my ace-gardener mom said when I told her about Weedless Gardening. I think author Lee Reich would agree that the title is a bit misleading (there will always be some weeds). Also a bit misleading are the blurbs from the publisher, which stop short of calling the book

"ground-breaking" only because Reich's system is based on the total eschewal of tilling or otherwise turning over the soil. The building blocks of his philosophy have been in use for decades in one way or another: from low-till commercial farming techniques (which sometimes also involve firebombing the soil with herbicide) to simple green composting with knocked-down cover crops. But in *Weedless Gardening* Reich takes it all the way, no tilling, no herbicide unless absolutely necessary--all while providing everything the home gardener needs to know about cover crops, composting, and drip irrigation. In every section Reich lists mail-order and Internet sources for supplies. The benefits of cover crops, composting, and planting in beds rather than rows are widely known, and they're dealt with in depth here. More controversial is Reich's injunction to rigorously preserve the natural layering of the soil--even when pulling up weeds, dead annuals, or old corn stalks. He makes a good case: tilling under weedy areas kills existing weeds in the short term, but turning over the dirt exposes more weed seeds to sunlight and air, and more of them will germinate; better to kill them first by mowing and self-composting or smothering them with mulch. In addition, Reich explains, water in broken-up, uniform soil tends to flow straight down; water in undisturbed soil travels more slowly, in different directions--down and sideways--thus more efficiently reaching roots. Installing a drip irrigation system further decreases water use (the book includes detailed instructions and formulas for calculating water-flow and timing) and, like many of Reich's recommendations, apparently works best when practiced in concert with his no-till, "top-down" method. What isn't clear is how effective his system can be in an area that has been worked over by indifferent landscapers or that has already been tilled over and over for years. How long will it take for that plot's soil to resettle into something resembling its pretilled state? If my mom starts "weedless gardening" now, will she be wading through a forest of weeds or, worse, buying tasteless corn at the supermarket come August? --Liana Fredley

Weeds are every gardener's nemesis, so any book promising to eliminate them is certain to excite interest. Fortunately, Reich's approach is a credible one. A former agricultural researcher for Cornell University and the USDA, Reich (*Uncommon Fruits Worthy of Attention: A Gardener's Guide*) challenges conventional gardening or gardening from the bottom up, in which the soil is turned over every spring or fall. This method exposes to light and air all the weed seeds lying dormant in the soil and encourages weed growth. Reich maintains that instead, since soil health determines plant health, gardeners should essentially create new soil by gardening as nature does from the top down. This means placing layers of newspaper over the soil to smother weed growth, covering the area year after year with mulch (which can include compost, leaves, bark chips or peat moss), then

planting in that rich medium. He outlines his method in detail, offering modifications for different soil types and adding irrigation, planting, harvesting and tidying tips. Numerous charts and illustrations accompany Reich's chatty, highly literate text. He also discusses cover crops, vegetables, various types of flower garden designs, groundcovers, trees (including fruit trees), shrubs and vines, all of which can flourish under the weedless gardening technique. Reich's is a revolutionary approach to gardening, engagingly and lucidly explained. (Mar.) Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This book is a little smaller than I thought it was going to be but that's alright because it's got vital information in it that I wanted to know. Especially how to start a garden to be weedless. I was also interested in finding out how I could water just a little bit with the drip irrigation because I saw a segment of this on TV and it's really awesome. This book tells me how to do my organic garden just the way mother nature would do it from the top down which is really an awesome concept. I don't want to have to till every year and I don't have to anymore after reading this book. This is great as a reference to find out everything I need to know about how to do this correctly and I had no idea until I saw this on TV and I ordered the book so I am very excited.

I'm always interested in new gardening techniques. I saw information about the author and his method of growing on a TV show "Growing a Greener World", so I had the book put onto my kindle. The older I get I am more and more open to methods of gardening that are easier on the body and this no till method is certainly that, as anyone who has wrestled with a tiller or back breaking shovel work can attest to! What intrigued me was this method doesn't encourage weeds to sprout because there is no tilling the seeds aren't brought to the surface where they can get the nutrients they need to grow. Instead they remain dormant in the untilled soil!

I found this book honest and helpful. Finding information on mulching/composting as a long term way of controlling weeds is hard to find and this book provides a lot of helpful information. Dr. Reich has an effective and easy to apply method for controlling weeds in a garden bed. Controlling Bermuda grass (quack grass) at the edges of my beds is an on going struggle for which I do not have a good solution (pulling weeds is quite labor intensive and needs to be repeated often). Hopefully this book will get an update with newer research findings in this area. I highly recommend this book.

Better yet, go ahead and sell the tiller -- you probably don't need it. Introduced to the idea of

mulch-bed gardening by Gene Logsdon, I implemented the method in my garden this year. It is now September, and I probably haven't spent half an hour pulling weeds all summer. And it isn't because I have let things go; there just hasn't been that many weeds. About the only problem I have had is grass encroaching from the sides. With so few weeds, I was beginning to wonder if there was a problem. My vegetable plants are doing just fine, though, and have generally been much more productive than they were last year. Now that I have read Reich's book, I have a clearer idea of what's going on and understand how I might do things even better next time around. Weedless Gardening is similar to the method Logsdon describes in *The Contrary Farmer's Invitation to Gardening* -- though it might be more accurately described as compost-bed gardening -- but Reich goes into more detail on the particulars, at least as far as keeping the weeds at bay goes. (Now don't get me wrong: I have enjoyed reading and profited from Logsdon's writing as well.) This is an easy read with a lot of good information packed into a relatively short book. Not having to deal with so many weeds (or wondering when I would find the time to deal with them!) makes gardening so much more enjoyable. I only wish I had discovered this book a few years ago. As an aside, anyone with poultry might also find Andy Lee's book *Chicken Tractor* helpful. It too describes a variation of the no-till theme. p.s. To address Joseph's comment (below) in part, I can get unprinted newsprint paper from my local newspaper. They usually discard the very last part of each roll; just ask if they have any "end rolls" available.

People never believe me when I tell them that I spend almost no time weeding my gardens because I have no weeds to deal with. I've been following a variation of this method for years, and Dr. Reich does a fantastic job explaining the methods he uses. I would have loved to see more information about his watering methods (eg, how many drip lines per row), but he provides so much great instruction that I recommend this book to anyone tending a garden almost any size.

Favorite go to book for our small organic farm. Getting the weeds to stay down is half the battle. We get lots of rain and lots of weeds just waiting to be set loose by tilling. Of course you may need to first break up the hard pan soil, but from that point on, Lee Reich's book has a great sustainable solution to your weeding woes. It's not "just" a weedless gardening book though. He gives info on his universal pabulum for slow release organic fertilizer, tips on how to plant trees and a general all round gardening book. I've bought three copies, as they seem to find their way out to the garden and get soaked. Great book. Five stars!

I am enjoying the book, very good and simple ideas.

Mr. Reich's "bare bones of Weedless Gardening" are: 1. minimize soil disruption 2. protect soil surface 3. avoid soil compaction 4. use drip irrigation Sounds simple? It is! I implemented steps 1-3 (drip is not allowed in my community garden) in half of my garden, and months later, the results speak for themselves. The half in which I tried these techniques has tidy beds with the intended plants growing in them. The other half is a field of weeds. This book explains mulch, compost, cover crops, drip irrigation, layouts, the application of Weedless Gardening to specific vegetables (e.g., you don't have to dig a trench to grow asparagus), flower gardens, and planting trees and shrubs, all in clear, concise language and a very manageable size. As a relative beginner, I found it all easy to understand. As a student, I was pleased that I didn't have to buy expensive materials (did you know many landfills offer free compost?). This book, and perhaps a book tailored to your region, will provide all the basic gardening advice you need. All these pros make up for the fact that the other gardeners around think I'm crazy since they saw me newspaper-ing my garden.

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