

Hoe — hoe — hoe!!

...the Santa Claus treatment

Despite several thousand years of advances in agricultural technology, the best way to control weeds in a home vegetable or flower garden remains the "Santa Claus" treatment: HOE-HOE-HOE, says Jack Dekker, weed science specialist of the University of Guelph's crop science department.

Easier methods of weed control are available but they have drawbacks. Home gardens include a wide variety of plants and no one herbicide is safe to use on all of them. Therefore, it is often best to consider mechanical weed control methods.

Using a hoe, or small hand cultivator, is easiest and most effective, when garden weeds are small. Shallow hoeing is best as it both conserves valuable soil moisture, and it prevents harming nearby crop roots.

There are other benefits to be derived from hoeing: it provides invigorating and healthful exercise and it allows you to closely monitor your garden throughout the summer for the first signs of other garden pests such as insects, slugs and diseases. The timely monitoring of your garden can help you to stop problems before they get too serious.

Another effective way to keep weeds from growing and conserve soil moisture and moderate temperature is to mulch the soil. Colored plastic shades out weeds. Lay a metrewide (three foot) strip of plastic on top of the soil. Tuck the edges into shallow trenches and cover with soil. This is done after you have prepared the soil for planting. Punch holes through plastic at each place where transplants are planted or seeded crops germinate and emerge.

Other mulching materials that prevent weeds from growing are straw, grass clippings, wood chips, or stone chips.

Larger home gardens may warrant the use of chemical weed control. Some plan-



ning is necessary to simplify the use of herbicides common to a number of crops. It is usually wise to keep all perennial crops, such as strawberries, raspberries, rhubarb, asparagus, and fruit trees, on one side of the garden.

Some herbicides can be applied as a spray before planting and then incorporated into the top 10 centimetres (four inches) of soil. Treflan (400 grams per litre) is a preplant incorporated herbicide that controls some broadleaf weeds and most annual grasses. It can be used on snap beans, cole crops, carrots, peppers, turnips and tomatoes at a rate of 14 millilitres to 28 millilitres per 93 square metres (½ to one fluid ounce per 1,000 square feet).

Another group of herbicides can be used to control weeds at the pre-emergence stage (after seeding but before the crop or weed emerges).

Amiben (10 per cent granular) is sprinkled (not sprayed) on to the soil surface to control most broadleaf weeds and annual grasses in asparagus, snap beans, carrots, peppers, potatoes and tomatoes. Apply at 28 gm per 93 square metres (one oz. 1,000 sq. ft.).

Lorox or Afolan (50 per cent wettable powder) controls most broadleaf weeds and some annual grasses in asparagus, carrots and potatoes when applied premergent as a spray to these crops at a rate of 28mL per 93 square metres (one oz. per 1,000 sq. ft.)

Basagran (400/gm/L is applied as a postemergent herbicide to control most broadleaf weeds, but not annual grasses, in snap beans. It is applied at a rate of 14mL to 21mL per 93 square metres (½ oz. to ¾ oz. per 1,000 sq. ft.).

Apply the suggested rates in three litres to four litres (½ to one gallon) of water per 93 square metres (1,000 sq. ft.). Apply granular herbicides by sprinkling on the ground with a shaker made from an old tin can with fine holes. Apply liquids or wettable powders in four L of water (one gallon) per 93 square metres (1,000 sq. ft.).

Complete herbicide recommendations are provided in Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food Publication 75 "Guide to Chemical Weed Control".

Copies are available from local agriculture offices and from the Communications Branch, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Legislative Buildings, Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A5.

A number of annual flowers will tolerate a preplant incorporated application of Treflan or Eptan before flowers are planted, or a pre-emergence application of Amiben granular before weeds emerge, and after annuals are transplanted and established. Some species are susceptible to the herbicides, however. Read the label carefully.

Mechanical weed control, weed prevention, and mulches are the safest methods of controlling weeds in gardens. A few herbicides are registered for use, but proper and accurate application and knowledge of weeds that can be controlled and what garden crops are tolerant, are all important for successful use.

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