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Managing gardens without pesticides.

Historical garden and bed management practice has included some limited use of herbicides - primarily Round-up. This product is now a banned substance in the City of Victoria - except for use on driveways, gravel and other hardscapes.

With enforcement of Pesticide By-laws in many municipalities, mechanical and cultural control of weeds will remain the only practical response to weed management. These practices will in most cases create more garden costs for owners.

Cultural

Plant health:

- Plant and shrub density is the best defense against weed growth in the landscape. Plant density reduces or eliminates light.
- The promotion of healthy plants is important.

Mechanical

Mulching:

- Clean, organic mulches - placed over weeded bed surfaces - to a depth of 2-3" is essential for weed control in the garden.
- Mulch will break down - it is intended to do so, and will help to build healthy top soils.
- Mulch will need to be replenished at least every 2 years. Some additional money needs to be included in annual maintenance budgets to facilitate this process.
- The mulch layer must not be mechanically cultivated for weed control. This contaminates the mulch layer and promotes weed growth.
- The mulch is the best preventative method for weeds as it excludes light and, when weeds do grow through the organic layer they are easily or effortlessly removed.

Hoeing:

- Hoeing of the mulch should be restricted to a stirrup type hoe. This will insure that the mulch layer is minimally disturbed. Weed and leaf debris can then be raked up.
- Mechanical manipulation of the bed surface is the most labor intensive - and, in most cases will result in extra management costs.