

# Listen to Your Weeds

Amended from original article by Evelyn Fletcher, Putnam Co. Extension Agent I, Residential Horticulture

One of the many perks of living in Florida is the plethora of plant diversity. This includes weeds in our landscapes, gardens and farms. Our weeds are beneficial and can serve as handy indicators of our soil and cultural practices. We always recommend identifying weeds before starting to control them.

So before you make the effort to get rid of them, take a moment to learn about why they are occurring on your property. It may help you prevent the problem from reoccurring, simplify your life and maybe help your desirable plants too!

## **Weeds that say “Your soil is wet.”**

Purple/yellow nutsedge

Dollarweed

Annual Jewgrass (Fig. 1)

*What to do? Discontinue irrigation. Utilize plants that thrive naturally in this environment, like Narrowleaf Sunflowers and Cordgrass.*



Figure 1 Credit: Okeechobee Extension

## **Weeds that say “Your pH is low.”**

Dandelion

Red sorrel

*What to do? You can add lime, BUT! Your desirable plants may suffer if the pH rises too high. Utilize plants that thrive naturally in this environment like Azaleas and Blueberries.*

## **Weeds that say “Your pH is high.”**

Hemp sesbania

Broadleaf plantain

*What to do? You can add sulfur, but like lime, it can have detrimental effects to your established plants. Utilize plants that thrive naturally in this environment like Blanket Flower and Muhly Grass.*

## **Weeds that say “Your soil is dry.”**

Sandspurs

Black medic (Fig. 2)

Virginia pepperweed

*What to do? Add organic matter or compost to your soil to improve the moisture-holding capacity. Utilize Beach Sunflowers.*



Figure 2 Credit: UF/IFAS

Control undesirable weeds physically (hand removing) or culturally (reducing or eliminating irrigation). Herbicides should be your last resort when nothing else works. If you are struggling to identify your weeds, please take photos and bring samples to your local extension office. We can help you much quicker when you bring in the entire plant—roots, stems and leaves. If your weed has begun to flower or has gone to seed, that helps even more with the identification process.

Avoid applying fertilizer or pesticides in your lawns and landscapes before we get rain. One inch of rain water can move ten inches down the soil profile, and we'd like to avoid leaching harmful chemicals into our aquifer.