

WEEDING

Weeding is a vital aspect to the success of the system that we advocate in Foundations for Farming. It needs to be imparted well and continually monitored and re-taught where necessary as the season continues.



Late Weeding

Late weed control is something that we find most farmers don't seem to grab hold of, failing to see its great importance. This can be much to their own cost as it allows millions of weed seeds back into the soil and these weeds remove vital moisture and nutrients that can be retained at the end of the season. This in turn results in more work later on. Apart from anything else the late proliferation of weeds looks untidy!

Late weed control is a pivotal point! Much of the system of farming that we are teaching hinges on the success of weeding and we should therefore give it far more attention.

It is incredibly discouraging to face a field full of weeds at the end of the current crop and this is quite clearly the reason why many people either burn or plough. If we do not practice weed control throughout the previous season the preparation for a new season is far harder and far more daunting.

What is often found is that many farmers will weed carefully until they see a crop and cobs have developed and then the impetus to weed seems to fade. At this time the crop is almost ready to harvest and weeds grow rapidly due to the extra sunlight and the remaining moisture retained in the soil. These weeds then produce seed that will give us a further crop of weeds in the following year.

Regular Weeding

Weeds should be controlled until such time as the conditions are too dry for germination, which in turn means that we are preparing the land for the following season. Having harvested, the crop residue can then be applied as the mulch for the following season.

When weeds are kept under control harvesting is easier too.

We should encourage those we are training to practice regular weeding as soon as weeds germinate as this is far less effort than pulling large weeds. Once weeds have grown large they have already removed much of the soil's moisture and nutrients intended for the crop, which will heavily contribute to crop stunting.

If our farmers' stand is full, with a good covering leaf canopy, only *four light weeding*s should be required in the crop during the season. Again timing is the answer!

In Summary

- Hoe weeds when they are *very small*. It's easier than removing bigger weeds, and requires far less effort and energy.
- Be precise when planting seeds, ensuring a *good early crop canopy* to shade out the weeds.
- Weed *throughout the season* and again at the end of the growing phase.
- Weed *by hand* or using handheld instruments disturbing the soil as little as possible.
- Pull or cut out the weeds. Don't dig. Use the hoe like a cutting knife rather than digging trying to *prevent soil disturbance*.

Weeding is a key part of farming! REMEMBER: on time, at standard, without wastage, with joy!