



TORAH VEHA'ARETZ

INSTITUTE

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Preparing The Garden for Shemittah #4: Weeding -

The Gemara (Mo'ed Katan 3a) writes that *nikush* and *kisuach* are forbidden during Shemittah. Rashi explains that *nikush* is removing the weeds with the root (weeding), and *kisuach* is cutting the weeds above the ground (mowing).

Earlier the Gemara explained that weeding is forbidden on Shabbat, either as *tolada* of *choresh* (plowing - making the soil better), or as *tolada* of *zoreah* (allowing the plants near the weeds to grow larger as they now have less competition).

The *poskim* write that weeding is more serious than mowing, and therefore

where necessary (see below) only mowing and not weeding should be allowed.

Weeding during Shemittah

Annual weeds: if they do not dominate the garden but are merely an eyesore, it is best not to uproot them.

Weeds that spoil considerably the garden's appearance; or genuinely compete with its plants; or threaten to provide cover for various pests (e.g. snakes, scorpions); proceed in the following order of preference:

Spray with various growth-preventative chemicals (available at gardening stores and with gardeners). It is recommended to concentrate on areas where weeds generally sprout and also to spray in early winter.

Cover the area with a black sheet (that blocks light).

Spray existing weeds (available as mentioned above, see a.).

Mow down weeds above soil (with a lawnmower or scythe mower, etc.).

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Weeds should not be uprooted at all during shemithah.

Removal of weeds from synthetic grass or cement or grown through tiles – is allowed, provided that the garden plants are away from the weeds, so the removal of weeds will not affect the plants.

What to do before Shemithah?

Treat all types of weeds before Shemithah using a variety of methods (motorized scythe, spraying, uprooting by hand etc.). Best to do it before blooming and spreading seeds.

It is recommended to cover the ground with sheeting and cover materials such as: tree cuttings, gravel pebbles etc. in order to minimize the need to weed on Shemithah. Another suggestion is to use anti-germination sprays, pre-emergence weed killers, etc.

What about cutting the grass? Next week. ■

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