

Composting Sod and Weeds That Spread By Roots

Roots and rhizomes

Weeds that spread through roots or rhizomes, and sod stripped from a lawn can only be composted in completely covered piles. The roots of these plants (including quackgrass, morning-glory, blackberry, buttercup and ivy) will sprout and spread through home compost piles unless light is completely excluded. Sod piles may take six months to two years to completely decompose and kill spreading roots, depending on the moisture and nutrient content, and types of weeds added.

Vegetative weeds

Small volumes of vegetatively spreading weeds can be composted in any system that effectively excludes light and prevents their growth. A covered garbage can or extra thick black plastic bag can be used as a weed holding pile. It may take a year or longer to kill these aggressive weeds.



Do not put flowers or seed heads of any weeds into sod piles.

Weed seeds can only be killed by the high, uniform temperatures achieved in a large compost pile.

Large quantities of weeds

To compost large quantities of stripped sod or roots and rhizomes of spreading weeds:

1. Locate pile in a shady spot if possible, such as on the north side of a fence or building.
2. Stack fresh cut sod, roots up, in a compact pile.
3. Make sure each layer is thoroughly moist. If sod is dry, use a garden hose with spray head to wet each layer as the pile is built.
4. If the sod is already brown, or includes a thick layer of thatch, sprinkle each layer with a high nitrogen fertilizer such as lawn fertilizer *without herbicide*, blood meal, cottonseed meal, or urea. Use about 1 pound of actual nitrogen for a one cubic yard pile—3' x 3' x 3'. (8 pounds of blood meal, 15 pounds of cottonseed meal, or 2 pounds of urea.)
5. Cover the entire pile (including the sides) with heavy (6 mil thick) black plastic. Multiple layers of plastic help retain moisture. Secure the cover thoroughly by laying rocks or bricks on the edges all around the pile.



