

# Give Weeds a Chance to be Useful

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Burdock root as an adult plant

Sometimes you just have to be curious and give weeds a chance to prove they might be useful. This happened this summer at Mezzacello. I thought I was planting Turnips in bed Gamma 4 . The leaves came up. Full disclosure: Turnips and their greens are a favorite. Seeing all the leaves growing made me happy.

### **“Turnips” Everywhere**

It was then that I noticed there were “turnips” growing in Alpha and Beta beds as well. I did not like this! I had discovered an invasive root. I immediately set to eradicating it as I saw it come up. This was burdock, a very hearty and

fast growing native weed. My eradication was merciless.

The native weeds of an urban garden are very well-established. It took me years to eradicate poke, [fennel](#), and belladonna in this garden. So I wasn't happy to have such an invasive weed again. To this end, I was unsure how this weed could spread so quickly.

## Research Your Challenger

Being a naturally curious person, I decided to research the life cycle of the burdock plant. [As it turns out, it is a remarkably useful weed](#). It is most useful as a root, dried and powdered. There are also benefits of eating the leaves but like poke, the leaves require treatment before you can eat them. So this time around I will focus on the root. I never let the plants get to the flowering stage, so i have zero data on the flowers which are believed to be the inspiration for velcro.





Top: Alpha and Beta Bottom: Gamma and Delta



The burdock plant nearing flower production



Drying the rootball





Closeup of the rootball

I will dry this and then grind it into a powder. I will freeze a few others for use later. The stalks of the plant are an excellent stand in for celery. I will experiment with using this in a mire poix in the kitchen. But first I need to better understand how this spreads!