# Horticulturalist Jamie Walton challenges perceptions of weeds in gardening



In recent discussions surrounding gardening practices, horticulturalist Jamie Walton has gained attention for advocating a more nuanced perspective on weeds, challenging the conventional wisdom that often paints them as mere nuisances. Based in North Yorkshire, Walton is an ecological gardener known for his dynamic approach to landscape management, promoting biodiversity and sustainable practices through various platforms, including his popular Instagram account with 1.3 million followers and his recent appearances on BBC's Gardeners' World.

Walton’s new book, *Nettles and Petals: Grow Food. Eat Weeds. Sow Seeds*, offers readers “accessible, easy to follow tips and guidance about growing food and gardening, working with nature rather than against it.” He encourages gardeners to shift their mindset regarding weeds, suggesting that these often maligned plants can play crucial roles in the ecosystem.

Reflecting on his early gardening experiences, Walton admits, “When I first started gardening and growing my own food, I spent a lot of time trying to eradicate weeds from my garden like most people.” However, as he delved deeper into ecological practices and the need for biodiversity, his perception changed. He highlights the benefits of what he terms 'pioneering weeds,' such as dandelions and nettles, which are adept at covering bare ground and preventing soil erosion.

Walton elaborates that dandelions, often viewed as unwanted garden intruders, actually have notable nutritional benefits. “They have a better nutritional profile than rocket,” he explains, noting that the entire plant, from flowers to roots, is edible. The long tap roots of dandelions bring essential nutrients to the surface, which become available to surrounding plants when the weed dies back. His recommendation includes using dandelions to make syrup or as a coffee alternative by grinding the roots.

Similarly, Walton underscores the advantages of nettles, describing them as “the new spinach.” He asserts that they are highly nutritious and beneficial for general garden health. Nettles can be incorporated into various dishes like soups and stir-fries, replacing traditional leafy greens. Additionally, nettle tea is praised for its health benefits, including anti-inflammatory properties, while the stinging aspect of the plant is also discussed. “There’s a growing body of research that shows how beneficial nettle stings can be in certain contexts,” notes Walton, referencing potential relief for conditions such as hay fever and arthritis.

Despite his advocacy for embracing certain weeds, Walton is clear about their management. “If you let dandelions go to seed, you’ll end up with dandelions everywhere. So you have to keep on top of managing them,” he advises. He suggests picking flowers before they seed and utilising pots for growing these plants, allowing gardeners to manage their spread while still benefiting from their presence.

While not all weeds are beneficial, Walton warns against taking in invasive species such as bindweed, Japanese knotweed, or giant hogweed. These plants, despite having certain aesthetic or ecological advantages, are generally unwelcome due to their invasive nature and inability to provide edible benefits.

For those without gardens, Walton provides insights on foraging. He advises potential foragers to be informed and cautious, reminding them to avoid areas potentially contaminated by pesticides and to leave sufficient plants for wildlife. “It’s just knowing what you’re looking for and making sure you don’t pick something accidentally that you shouldn’t,” he cautions.

*Nettles and Petals* is published by Leaping Hare Press, with a price of £16.99 for the hardback edition and £11.99 for the ebook format. Walton's insights offer a refreshing perspective on the complex roles that weeds can play in not only personal gardens but also in broader ecological contexts.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/world-yorkshire-japanese-b2732860.html> - This article supports Jamie Walton's advocacy for embracing certain weeds, noting their nutritional benefits, and highlights his book Nettles and Petals: Grow Food. Eat Weeds. Sow Seeds. It also discusses his appearance on Gardeners' World and his Instagram following.
* <https://www.earthed.co/teachers/jamie-walton/> - This page details Jamie Walton's role as an ecological horticulturist and conservationist, emphasizing his commitment to biodiversity and sustainable gardening practices through Nettles & Petals.
* <https://www.instagram.com/nettlesandpetals/> - Jamie Walton's Instagram profile showcases his work as an ecological gardener, reflecting his mission to promote sustainable gardening and biodiversity.
* <https://festivalofgardensandnature.com/speakers/jamie-walton/> - This webpage highlights Jamie Walton's expertise as an ecological horticulturist and conservationist, sharing sustainable gardening techniques and promoting biodiversity.
* <https://www.instagram.com/nettlesandpetals/reel/C9IRsuMoJUB/> - This Instagram reel by Jamie Walton provides further insights into his gardening practices and experiences in North Yorkshire.