

What is a Weed?

Homo sapiens is perhaps the weediest of all species, and the more he dominates the landscape, the more he seems to thrive. If we confine the concept of weeds to species adapted to human disturbance, then man is by definition the first and primary weed under whose influence all other weeds have evolved. One might argue that man is a domesticated animal rather than a weed. But man existed a very long time before he domesticated any other species; he has never seriously or consistently attempted to improve the race by selection or breeding as he has with other domesticates; and if we apply the test of unwantedness, the current alarm over the population explosion would appear to place man more in the category of weeds than domesticated animals. If man does succeed in controlling his own population size, we shall have an example of a weed becoming domesticated.

Jack R. Harlan (1992) *Crops and Man*. 2^d edition.

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