PESTICIDES CAN BE HARMFUL TO HUMAN HEALTH

Children are more vulnerable to the health risks of pesticides. Studies have found links between the use of lawn pesticides and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma,[2] asthma,[3] hormonal issues,[4] weakened immune function and acute lukemia.[5] They are also exposed to higher amounts of pesticides because they often play on the ground where pesticide residues concentrate and put things in their mouths.[6] Plus, their bodies – and their defenses against toxins – are still developing.[7]

PESTICIDES DEGRADE THE SOIL

Common pesticides have been found to kill beneficial organisms and bacteria in the soil (tiny creatures that break down organic matter and make nutrients available to the lawn), as well as beneficial insects (like ladybugs and praying mantises) that are part of your lawn's natural defenses.[8]

PESTICIDES POLLUTE WATER

According to a U.S. Geological Survey study, every surface water body tested contains at least one, and often several pesticides.[9] Pesticides can leach down through soils and get into aquifers, which we depend on for drinking water.[10]

PESTICIDES CAN BE TOXIC TO WILDLIFE

Pesticides in water sources have been linked to abnormal development in amphibians and lead to reproductive, behavioral, immune system, and neurological problems.[11] Many pesticides are extremely toxic to pollinators and to aquatic life, such as fish and frogs.

PESTICIDES CAN HARM YOUR PETS

A study of dogs exposed to the common lawn herbicide, 2,4-D, found that owners who applied 2,4-D more than four times a year doubled the incidence of common canine cancer (canine malignant lymphoma or CML).

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SAFER PEST CONTROL PROJECT

Safer Pest Control Project is dedicated to reducing the health risks and environmental impacts of pesticides in Illinois by promoting safer effective alternatives.

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Sea Grant
ILLINOIS - INDIANA

Natural LAWN CARE *for Homeowners*

SAFER PEST CONTROL PROJECT

Too often, common childhood pastimes, such as running barefoot on the lawn with the dog, brings children and pets into direct contact with pesticides. These chemicals are then tracked into our homes where they adhere to carpets, furniture, even house dust. You can have a beautiful lawn without pesticides. It's easy and affordable. We hope that you'll make the change!

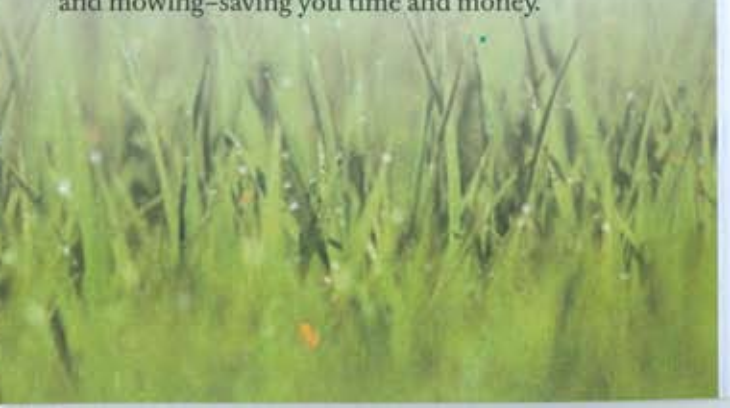
AREN'T LAWN PESTICIDES SAFE?

Pesticides are poisons designed to kill living things – insects, weeds, even animals. At the same time, they also can have a serious impact on human health and the environment. Just because a pesticide is registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), does not mean that it is safe. In fact, federal law prohibits pesticide manufacturers, distributors and retailers from making safety claims.[1]

Unfortunately, lawn care chemicals don't stay put on lawns. Instead, they end up in our homes where they can impact our health and in our air, water and soil where they affect wildlife, plants and local ecosystems.

NATURAL LAWN CARE BASICS

It is possible to have a lawn that looks good and doesn't harm your health or the environment. Natural Lawn Care focuses on restoring balance to the soil system – the microbes, organic matter, soil structure and nutrients that make a healthy lawn possible. Over time, your lawn will require less watering, fertilizing, and mowing–saving you time and money.



FOLLOW THESE BASIC STEPS TO GET THE RESULTS YOU WANT!

TAKE A SOIL TEST

Healthy lawns require healthy soil. Grass thrives when nutrients are properly balanced in the right amounts. Perform a soil test every three to five years to help you determine exactly what you may need to add to the soil to maintain its health. Soil testing is inexpensive and reduces unnecessary fertilizer applications, which saves you money.

FERTILIZE ORGANICALLY

Switch to an organic fertilizer made from plant or animal materials. Most commercial fertilizers have too much "fast release" nitrogen. Grass can't use it quickly enough so it washes away polluting nearby water sources. Organic fertilizers, on the other hand, allow the grass to absorb nutrients as needed. And don't forget to leave grass clippings on the lawn to fertilize naturally.

RESEED AND TOP DRESS ANNUALLY

Reseed at least once a year, in the spring or fall, with a mix of grass seed and compost. Select a variety of grass that has adapted to your region. Use hardy grasses such as fescues and ryes when possible. Water slightly each day for at least two weeks so the seed can get established. Top dressing with compost will naturally replenish your lawn, providing nutrients and microbes that keep your soil healthy.

BANISH WEEDS NATURALLY

Consider using corn gluten (an organic corn by-product that is a natural pre-emergent weed control) to reduce weeds. Apply it early in the spring, usually before the forsythia bloom. Over the course of a few growing seasons, you will see its impact. Invest in a sturdy weeding tool, and go after weeds as they appear, rather than all at once.

WATER CORRECTLY

Water deeply and infrequently early in the morning to minimize evaporation and safeguard against fungus problems. Ideally, you want one inch of water delivered once a week. Use a tuna can to measure when you have reached one inch. Daily brief watering discourages deep root growth, one of the essentials of healthy turf grass.

MOW PROPERLY

Mow your lawn at least three inches high. Correct mowing will increase the strength of the root system and naturally shade out some weeds. Don't mow your lawn every week out of habit. Mow with sharp blades, which make a clean cut. Dull blades will rip the grass, and weaken your lawn's defenses.

DIVERSIFY YOUR YARD

The reason turf grass takes so much work to maintain is because it is not native to our region. We recommend you diversify your yard to include native grasses, trees, bushes, and perennials. These will enhance the beauty of your home, attract birds and beneficial insects, and free up time and effort otherwise spent tending the grass.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

With safe, effective alternatives to lawn pesticides available, why risk health and environmental problems? For more details and a list of lawn care companies able to care for your lawn without dangerous chemicals, contact Safer Pest Control Project (SPCP): 773-878-7378 or go to www.spcpweb.org.