

The Gloves Are Off vs. Get A Grip

The greenwashing of the chemical lawn care industry

Over the past five years, something has been happening in the suburbs across the U.S. Slowly but surely, we are seeing less and less of the little lawn signs that let you know a lawn care company has been by to douse the yard with a soup of toxic pesticides and synthetic fertilizers. People are becoming more aware of the dangers that lawn care pesticides pose to their families, pets and the environment. Homeowners and residents are choosing organic and least-toxic lawn care methods and planting native, pest-resistant grasses. In dry climates, people are converting to xeriscaping, a system that drastically reduces or eliminates the need for pesticides, fertilizers and excessive watering. In Canada, the province of Quebec and nearly 70 cities and towns, including Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Halifax, have passed laws banning or restricting the use of pesticides for lawn care. While all of this is very good news for those who care about the health of their families, the environment and clean drinking water, it has another group of people very worried: the pesticide-based lawn care industry.

The pesticide industry “takes the gloves off”

This past winter, the pesticide industry, under the guise of an environmentally conscious front group, launched its *Gloves Are Off* attack ad campaign in the trade press calling environmentalists and health advocates “extremists” and “misinformed.” The campaign

is trying to spin the lawn care industry as pro-environment and repeatedly refers to itself as the “green industry.” Environmentalists see this as a strategy by companies stuck on using outdated, toxic technologies to stay afloat in a market ready to transition to organic techniques. The lawn industry front group, calling itself Project EverGreen, includes members such as Dow AgroSciences, Bayer Environmental Science, Syngenta Professional Products, RISE, The Scotts Company, TruGreen ChemLawn, Lawn Doctor, Inc., and more. The group is currently recruiting members to promote a pro-pesticide agenda and convince other applicators and the public that a chemically treated lawn is actually good for the environment.

Through its recent *Gloves Are Off* fundraising drive, Project Evergreen is trying to squeeze money out of its potential field of members to promote materials that greenwash the pesti-



THE GLOVES ARE OFF.

Because of activists, extremists and misinformed politicians, consumers are questioning whether the products and resources (such as water) used to care for their lawns, landscapes and other green spaces are a waste—or a harm to the environment. Yes, legislation and regulations have been throwing the green industry some rough punches. And we're about to start fighting back.

Project EverGreen is an alliance of green industry associations, companies and professionals dedicated to educate the public, protect the green industry and grow our business. It was created in response to unfavorable regulations in many parts of the United States and Canada. If the services our industry professionals offer are restricted, regulated or made illegal, everyone will lose revenue and customers.

Help Project EverGreen educate consumers on the environmental, economic and lifestyle benefits of green spaces. To make a contribution, volunteer your time or find out more information, call 1-877-758-4835 or visit www.projectevergreen.com.



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cide-based lawn care industry. Environmentalists believe this money could be better spent by encouraging lawn care service providers to invest their profits in the latest least-toxic, organic and other environmentally-friendly landscaping techniques. Instead, the front group is asking that this money be donated to produce materials to protect business-as-usual practices and the profits of its pesticide manufacturing membership base. The group is using the funds, in part, to distribute a doorknob pamphlet to tout the “environmental benefits” of conventional lawn care.

According to its website, the purpose of Project EverGreen is to “take a pro-active approach in dealing with the ever-alarming concerns regarding the future of the green industry related to the products and services used to create these well-maintained green spaces.” The website continues, “One merely has to look at coordinated activist efforts in such areas as Canada, New York State, Minnesota and western states to curtail or even eliminate pesticides and fertilizers, severely restrict the use of water and lawns and other efforts detrimental to the green industry and consumers. Every facet of the business – pesticides, equipment, seed, nutrients, irrigation and more – is at stake

here in the U.S. This is a pro-active effort designed to educate and inform consumers.”

Environmentalists tell the industry to “Get a grip”

In response to the industry’s *Gloves Are Off* attack ad, Beyond Pesticides put together its own *Get A Grip* copycat response ad. The ad explains that while the pesticide industry is trying to paint itself as environmentally-friendly, the facts clearly show a different picture.

However, the news does not have to be all bad for the lawn care industry. Environmentalists see the recent shift in public opinion over the use of lawn care, or cosmetic/aesthetic pesticides, as a opportunity for service providers to grow a new side of its business, rather than a threat to put them out of work. The ad goes on to explain that it is possible to have both a green lawn without toxic pesticides, and directs people to join the “Pesticide Free Zone” campaign to promote healthy, non-toxic lawns and landscapes. Both the Project Evergreen attack ad and Beyond Pesticides’ response ad are available online, in full-color at www.beyondpesticides.org.

The Scripps-Howard news service covered the issue in a news story that ran in the *Detroit News* on February 24, 2005 and this past January in Canada’s *Globe and Mail*. The story, “Lawn care industry in the U.S. Fears pesticide bans will grow,” discloses the lawn and chemical industry campaign to undercut local community and state campaigns to stop the aesthetic or cosmetic use of toxic pesticides. Since the recent attention, Project Evergreen has taken down the links to their *Gloves Are Off* advertisement from their website and removed the names of their chemical industry supporters.



GET A GRIP.

The chemical lawn care industry is worried that the word is getting out on the toxic hazards of lawn pesticides. So they are attacking environmentalists and health advocates. The facts speak for themselves. The public is finding out that the most commonly used lawn pesticides are linked to cancer, birth defects, developmental problems, and more. Plus they damage our environment.

Where yet, lawn pesticides are tracked into our homes. One recent study found residues of the toxic herbicide 2,4-D contaminating indoor air and surfaces, exposing children at rates ten times higher than prescription levels.

It is possible to have a green lawn without toxic pesticides. Beyond Pesticides is working to halt the needless pesticide exposure and encourages use of non-toxic lawn care practices.

Join the campaign to end unnecessary hazardous pesticide use on lawns. To order a “Pesticide Free Zone” lawn sign and learn about alternatives, contact Beyond Pesticides at 202-543-5450 or visit us online at www.beyondpesticides.org/lawns.




BEYOND PESTICIDES

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Health Effects of 30 Commonly Used Lawn Pesticides

Pesticide	Cancer	Reproductive Effects	Neurotoxicity	Kidney / Liver Damage	Sensitizer / Irritant	Birth Defects
Insecticides						
Acephate	POSSIBLE	X	X		X	
Carbaryl	POSSIBLE	X	X	X	X	X
Chlorpyrifos*		X	X		X	X
Dichlorvos (DDVP)	POSSIBLE		X	X	X	
Malathion	UNKNOWN		X		X	X
Trichlorfon		X	X	X	X	X
Herbicides						
Atrazine	POSSIBLE		X	X	X	X
Benefin					X	
Bensulide			X	X	X	
2,4-D	UNKNOWN	X	X	X	X	X
DSMA			X		X	
Dacthal (DCPA)	POSSIBLE			X	X	
Dicamba	UNKNOWN	X	X	X	X	
Endothall		X		X	X	
Glyphosate		X		X	X	
Isoxaben	POSSIBLE			X		X
MCPA		X	X		X	X
MCPP		X	X	X	X	X
MSMA			X		X	
Pendimethalin	POSSIBLE	X		X	X	
Pronamide	PROBABLE	X		X	X	
Siduron					X	
Triclopyr	UNKNOWN	X		X	X	X
Trifluralin	POSSIBLE	X		X	X	
Fungicides						
Chlorothalonil	LIKELY	X	X	X	X	
Maneb	PROBABLE	X	X	X	X	X
PCNB	POSSIBLE			X	X	X
Sulfur					X	
Triadimefon	POSSIBLE	X	X	X		X
Ziram		X	X		X	X
Total	13	18	18	20	28	14

* Phase-out banned residential use in 2001, still permitted for use on golf courses and for public mosquito control.

For a cited version of this factsheet, visit www.beyondpesticides.org/lawn or call 202-543-5450.

Source: Compiled by Beyond Pesticides from data gathered by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Government Accountability Office; International Agency for Research on Cancer, multiple pesticide profiles, and standard toxicology references.