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|  | Beyond PesticidesspacerBeware of Organic Claims* Be wary of "green consumer" claims. Growing consumer interest in environmental issues has encouraged many companies to pursue environmentally sound or "green" images. There are a growing number of reputable companies. Unfortunately, often businesses only change their image and not their product or service! The best defense against false claims is to look at labels closely and to question salespeople with a critical ear.
* Examine labels. Don't trust the company's marketing claims; read the label and find out the ingredients of the products being used. The ingredients speak for themselves.
* Investigate the toxicity and environmental effects of each ingredient and decide whether you think the product is environmentally sound. There is at least one fertilizer on the market that bills itself as "natural based," but in reality, this product contains a small percentage of composted chicken manure mixed with a large percentage of synthetic, petroleum-based fertilizer.
* Question service people. When a service provider asserts that he or she has an alternative lawn care or indoor pest control service, find out the specifics of their program - an integrated pest management program is only as good as the principles of the person providing it. What products do they consider acceptable? Do they monitor for pests (good) or spray on a fixed schedule (bad)? Do they attempt to determine the cause of a pest problem and fix it (good) or do they treat the symptoms only (bad)? Do they perform yearly soil tests? Do they keep records of their monitoring results? What training do they have in alternative services? Is most of their business is chemically-based programs or alternative ones?
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