

National Coalition for Pesticide-Free Lawns

Supporting healthy lawns and landscapes without the use of pesticides
701 E Street SE #200, Washington, DC 20003 - 202-543-5450 - shoover@beyondpesticides.org

GRASSROOTS NEWS

Dear Coalition member,

Across the country, there is a growing movement toward fostering naturally balanced and ecologically sustainable lawns and landscapes. As evidence of this movement the Coalition's Declaration on the Use of Toxic Lawn Pesticides has received almost 400 signatories - most of whom have also joined the Coalition.

Although the Home Depot action has received a lot of press coverage and attention, it is not the only way we are cultivating change. In this issue of Grassroots News, we continue with the Home Depot Take-In letter and Survey, offer tips on grasscycling, and present the exciting story of a new Connecticut pesticide-free lawns law.

Everywhere we turn, there is a new pesticide-free park being established (as in Lawrence, KS), a playing field now being organically managed (as in Peachtree City, GA), or a community of residents declaring their area a pesticide-free zone with lush, green lawns that are safe for kids, pets and water supplies (as in Falls Church, VA). Why are these changes occurring? Because ordinary people do extraordinary things!

As a member of the National Coalition for Pesticide-Free Lawns, we would love to hear from you. Tell us what is happening in your community that is helping to reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides. Are local ordinances in the works? Is your group helping to spread the word? Whatever it is, we want to know. Send your story to us by email: shoover@beyondpesticides.org; fax (202) 543-4791 or mail: Beyond Pesticides, 701 E St. SE, Washington, DC 20003.

AUGUST ACTION OF THE MONTH: Take-In Letter To Home Depot

We are happy to report that the Home Depot take-in letter action is being met by the public with unbridled enthusiasm. Around 4,000 letters have been taken in to Home Depot stores across the country and they are continuing to pour in. Your letters are making a difference; internal pressure is reaching headquarters. This action will go on until the company starts to heed the call. If you have not yet taken in a letter or completed a quick survey, please do so now - it's not too late.

Here's what people are saying:

I am so pleased to see that your organization is working on this issue. Our state's waters are being severely impacted by the run-off from fertilizers and pesticides used by homeowners, not to mention commercial lawn care companies.

(Marcie Clutter, FL)

The clerk at Home Depot said, "I am so glad that someone is doing something about this. When they move the display rack over here to promote pesticides I get sick from the fumes. Thanks."

(Elaine Wilson, Torrance, CA)

As a stockholder I am concerned about this matter. Further I mistakenly purchased and used the weed killer/grass feed - will not do this again. Thanks for the heads up.

(Faye & Effie Cutsinger, Baytown, TX)

You can view more comments like these as well as questions on the campaign on the website www.pesticidefreelawns.org under Take Action.

TIMELY TIP OF THE MONTH: Grasscycling

Lawn mowing is the most repeated chore in almost any landscape. Instead of hauling grass clippings off to the landfill, try a much easier and more environmental approach: grasscycling.

Grasscycling is an on-site composting program that is so easy anyone with a lawn can do it, and it requires no extra work! All you do is leave the clippings on the lawn (up to ½") and let them break down naturally. Grasscycling adds organic matter and nutrients (equivalent to adding roughly 5 lbs nitrogen, 2 lbs phosphorus and 5 lbs potassium per 1,000 sq ft) to your soil making it healthy and more pest-resistant. Grasscycling also conserves landfill space and energy while reducing fertilizer use and runoff. Whoever mows the lawn will appreciate the up 30% reduction in labor.

Tips on proper grasscycling:

- It is best to use a mower specifically engineered for grasscycling (i.e. mulching mowers).
- Mow when the turf is dry. Wet clippings clump and break down slowly - choking off the turf, and creating thin spots.
- Mow often so you never cut off more than 1/3 of the grass blades at one time.
- Move the mower slowly across the lawn.
- Keep blades sharp. This reduces stress and makes a clean cut, which deters pest invasion.
- Mow at the highest proper setting for your type of turfgrass.
- Clean under the mower deck to avoid clumping.
- **Bonus:** In fall, mulch dry leaves that fall on the lawn and grasscycle those too.

Timely Tips are provided by Steven M. Zien, executive director of Biological Urban Gardening Services and a member of the Coalition's Advisory Board. <http://www.organiclandscape.com>

WHAT'S NEW?

Connecticut Passes Lawn Pesticide Bill

A Connecticut bill banning lawn pesticides on the grounds of day care centers and elementary schools was signed into law in July 2005.

Under the bill, (SB 916), public and private pre-schools and elementary schools can use integrated pest management (IPM) techniques to apply pesticides sparingly on playgrounds and playing fields only until July 2008. After that, the fields must go organic. All toxic pesticides will be banned. The bill was passed in recognition of the health risks even common lawn chemicals pose, particularly to children.

Representative Lile Gibbons, one of the many co-sponsors of the bill, explained that, "Eventually all schools are going to fall under this."

"Connecticut is one of 30 states in which the pesticide industry has put preemption clauses into state statutes, making it illegal for towns to be more protective of their citizens when it comes to lawn-care pesticide exposures," explained Nancy Alderman, president of Environment and Human Health, Inc. (EHHI), a Connecticut-based advocacy group and member of the National Coalition for Pesticide-Free Lawns. She says she hopes that bill will serve as a model for other states to follow.

Fifteen states have laws requiring schools to use IPM methods. Under Connecticut's current law, schools are recommended but not required to implement IPM programs, and schools can spray even highly toxic, restricted-use pesticides on school lawns and fields as long as they post notification signs. The new, tougher bill is one of the strictest school lawn pesticide bills in the country.

For more information, visit www.ehhi.org.



Dear Store Manager:

I am a regular customer at Home Depot and a supporter of the National Coalition for Pesticide-Free Lawns. I was very pleased to learn that Home Depot was asked by Beyond Pesticides and Defenders of Wildlife on behalf of the Coalition to carry a full range of natural, non-toxic lawn and garden products. The group is also asking Home Depot to train staff to be knowledgeable about non-toxic alternatives, to provide natural lawn do-it-yourself materials, and to reconsider the sale of "weed and feed." It is currently impossible to shop at Home Depot and purchase the full array of products needed to maintain a natural lawn or garden. I would like to see not just one or two natural lawn and garden products on your shelves – but a full range by Spring 2006.

As the fall season approaches, now is the time to be considering making natural lawn and garden products part of your purchase orders for next Spring!

I would like to shop at Home Depot for my lawn and garden products and will be watching to see if more non-toxic products become available and if efforts are undertaken to train your employees and provide materials on natural lawn care. I urge you to work with the National Coalition for Pesticide-Free Lawns to help make this a reality.

Thank you for listening to my concerns and please be sure to convey my support to corporate headquarters.

Sincerely,

National Coalition for Pesticide-Free Lawns



RETAILER SURVEY

Survey done by: _____ Date: _____

Retailer Name: _____ City, State: _____

<p>Does the store promote lawn and garden products near the front entrance(s)? Are any of the bags ripped or leaking?</p>	
<p>Does the store sell any non-toxic, natural lawn products?</p> <p>TIPS: Look for the active ingredient. Non-toxic products contain natural ingredients like vinegar, corn gluten, lemon, pepper or other botanical or essential oils.</p> <p>Please provide the names of the natural products. If you are uncertain if the product is natural/non-toxic, list it anyway.</p>	<p>Natural Fertilizers: (i.e. Fish emulsion, seaweed, feather or bone meal, rock powders. No biosolids, Urea or other synthetics.)</p> <p>Weed/Insect/Fungus/Disease Controls:</p>
<p>Roughly what percentage of the shelf is occupied by toxic vs. non-toxic products?</p>	
<p>Are there any written materials in the store on natural lawn care or natural products?</p>	<p>If so, which?</p>
ASKING THE SALESPERSON	
<p>How familiar is the home & garden staff person with natural lawn products sold in the store, if any? Ask the salesperson to explain when and how to use the natural product.</p>	<p>Not at all Somewhat Very Familiar</p>
<p>Pose a problem to the salesperson and document the response: "I have grubs, what should I do/use?" "I have a problem with dandelions, what should I do/use?"</p>	<p>Salesperson suggested:</p>
<p>Ask the salesperson how safe the toxic products are to use around children or pets?</p>	<p>Salesperson said:</p>

Please Fax or Mail survey to: Beyond Pesticides 701 E Street SE #200 Washington, DC 20003. Fax (202) 543-4791. For questions, visit www.pesticidefreelawns.org.