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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Lawn Pesticides Uprooted Amidst New Lawn Season**

**20 Consumer and Environmental Groups Ask Home Depot and Lowe's  
to Supply Poison-Free Products for Lawns and Landscapes**

**Washington, DC, April 13, 2005** – Today, 20 consumer and environmental groups from across the country asked the national headquarters of Home Depot and Lowe's Home Improvement, two of the largest home and garden retailers, to carry a full range of organic, non-toxic lawn care products to protect the health of children, families, pets and the environment and to reconsider the sale of "weed and feed" due to its hazards and environmental pollution. Recent surveys show almost half of all households buying lawn care products are seeking non-toxic alternatives.

"Children are particularly vulnerable to exposure from lawn chemicals," says Dr. Routt Reigart, pediatrician at the Medical University of South Carolina. "Many of the chemicals typically used on lawns present acute and chronic risks to children's health."

The groups also announce the release of an online [Declaration on the Use of Toxic Lawn Pesticides](#) and formation of the *National Coalition for Pesticide-Free Lawns*, a growing popular movement of consumer and environmental groups, coming together to educate the public, retailers, landscapers and policy makers about the hazards of lawn chemicals and the viability of safe alternatives. Fourteen of 30 commonly used lawn pesticides are 'probable' or 'possible' carcinogens with studies linked to cancer.

Out of 213 million pounds of non-agricultural pesticide use in the U.S., more than 90 million pounds are used on private lawns and gardens per year. Some ten percent comes from "weed and feed" products alone, which result in runoff and contaminated drinking water sources. Surveys show 40 million homeowners are buying or looking to buy non-toxic, natural alternatives. Other surveys show that with a little education on the hazards of lawn chemicals even more homeowners would consider buying natural alternatives, presuming they are conveniently available.

“Scientific findings show that the lawn chemical mixtures are linked to neurological, endocrine, immune, and abortion effects. The greatest effects appear to be happening at miniscule exposure amounts,” says Warren Porter, Ph.D., environmental toxicologist at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

“The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency does not evaluate low level exposures like the ones people receive from these lawn products and it doesn’t evaluate the actual product mixtures found on store shelves,” says Jay Feldman executive director at Beyond Pesticides.

“Twenty-eight of 30 commonly used lawn pesticides are toxic to birds, aquatic organisms like fish or important beneficial insects such as bumble bees, which are critical pollinators of plants and flowers,” says Caroline Kennedy, Director of Conservation Initiatives for Defenders of Wildlife. “Keeping a yard with non-toxic alternatives is far easier than the lawn pesticide companies would have you believe, and it’s the best way we can go easy on neighborhood wildlife.”

The group’s request to the retailers, Home Depot and Lowe’s, follows on the heels of a new million-dollar public relations marketing campaign by the lawn chemical industry that public interest groups say mislead consumers and landscapers on the hazards of pesticides and on the aesthetic and economic viability of creating green lawns and landscapes without the use of toxic lawn pesticides.

The chemical industry’s efforts are largely in response to recent bans on aesthetic uses of pesticides in Canada where seventy municipalities, including Toronto, Quebec, and Halifax, have banned or severely restricted lawn pesticide use. Most states in the U.S. have laws that prevent localities from making such reforms, but in at least seven states legislation is pending that would overturn those laws and open the way for greater protections from lawn chemicals as in Canada.

“We believe in the democratic right of local jurisdictions to protect the health and welfare of their residents,” says Shawnee Hoover, special projects director at Beyond Pesticides. “Especially where the community has determined that state laws are insufficiently protective. The fact is healthy, non-toxic lawns and landscapes are realistically achievable, there’s just no need to be exposing our kids to carcinogens.”

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*For a press packet of background materials, visit <http://www.pesticidefreelawns.org>.*