

## **Keep your lawn and garden off drugs**

What do you think of when the term 'pesticide' comes to mind? Many people think of bug or weed control with the use of insecticides or herbicides, but do you think of rodenticides, fungicides or avicides? Most people don't. The word 'pesticide' means 'pest killer' and is used to describe all synthetic chemicals used to kill, suppress, or repel insects, plants, fungi, rodents or birds. Pesticides are used for maximizing agricultural crops, maintaining a weed-free lawn or eliminating unwanted creepy crawlies around the house. Widespread use of chemical pesticides began in the 1930s and intensified through the 1950s.

Pesticides work by disrupting a vital process in the target organism, such as photosynthesis in plants. They are generally very potent and powerful chemicals. While the intention may be to harm just the target organism, the reality is that many pesticides harm a number of other plants and animals, including humans, not targeted in their application. The animals that are exposed to the highest concentrations of pesticides are often the predators of the very pest that is being targeted, resulting in a population boom of the pest the next year. Insecticides aimed at adult mosquitoes kill other flying insects, including important honeybees and dragon flies. Pesticides also enter our lakes and rivers through surface runoff and storm sewers. As aquatic organisms filter large volumes of water, they are exposed to concentrated levels of pesticides. It is important to remember that individual plants and animals are all connected in an ecosystem. Therefore, the entire food chain experiences the consequences of pesticide use.

Pesticides have varying effects on different life forms, which can be chronic, easily overlooked by the casual observer or do not become obvious until later generations. The effects of pesticides seen in plants and animals include death, problems with the reproductive, immune and hormonal systems, cell and DNA damage, physical deformities, lesions, cancers and tumors. Not surprisingly, humans also experience many of the same effects due to pesticide exposure.

The Canadian Cancer Society, a national organization, which advocates for cancer prevention and healthy public policies, has expressed concern about pesticides as a cause of cancer. The Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment has attributed a multitude of other diseases and developmental abnormalities in humans to pesticide use. In Canada, over 130 municipalities including Nelson, Toronto and the province of Quebec have taken a leadership role in banning pesticides in their communities.

What can we do to prevent pesticides from harming the environment and our health? The only effective way is to stop using pesticides. In the same way that human health does not depend on drugs, plant and animal health does not depend on pesticides. Although you may experience withdrawals at first, you will soon find that living without these potent chemicals is not as painful as you imagined. Perhaps you'll even learn to love and live with the "pests" that seemed so bothersome before. But if not, there are many safe and natural ways to control pests. A few of the many natural methods available are maintaining a rich and healthy soil in your lawn and garden, trying companion planting or using live traps to relocated small critters. You can check with local garden suppliers or online at [www.pesticidefreekimberley.ca](http://www.pesticidefreekimberley.ca) for more natural pest remedies.

To learn more about the risks associated with pesticides and how the law does, and doesn't protect human health and the environment, join us for a free presentation by Andrew Gage,

Staff Lawyer with West Coast Environmental Law. The presentation will take place Monday, September 17<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm at the David Thompson Secondary School Theatre.

For more information contact the Lake Windermere Project at 341-6898. You can also visit the Project office located in the old District of Invermere office beside the Invermere Community Center. The Lake Windermere Project is a non-profit, long-term comprehensive stewardship program dedicated to safeguarding the health of our lake. The Lake Windermere Project is made possible by generous support from Wildsight, Environment Canada, Columbia Basin Trust and the Real estate Foundation of B.C.