

REAP FACTSHEET #1

Pesticides: The Basics!



What is a Pesticide?

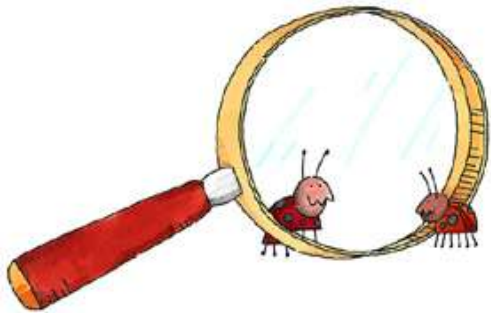
According to the British Columbia Pesticide Control Act (1997) a "pesticide" is any material that is intended to prevent, destroy, repel or mitigate a "pest". The word pesticide is often misunderstood to mean only an insecticide when actually it refers also to herbicides, rodenticides, fungicides, miticides, as well as wood preservatives, disinfectants, and products that control algae. Because there are so many kinds of pesticides, many people don't often even realize that what they are using could be harmful to the environment. For example Weed-n-Feed is commonly mistaken for a fertilizer product - when it is actually a registered pesticide!

Why are Pesticides Dangerous?

Pesticides, by their very nature, are designed to kill, and unfortunately they can therefore harm creatures that were not the intended target. Beneficial insects and other natural predators of pests can be harmed and killed by pesticide exposure. Pesticide drift and runoff can also result in adverse affects to non-target plants, and contribute to water pollution. But it isn't just the environment that is at risk, there are also potential health threats. This is especially the case with children, who are more susceptible to toxins in the environment. You should also be concerned about your pets - high rates of cancer in dogs have been correlated to exposure to lawn pesticides.

Did you know that in a recent poll, commissioned by SPEC, 80.6% of GVRD residents stated that they were in support of by-laws or regulations in their municipality to restrict the use of cosmetic pesticides?

For full results go to www.spec.bc.ca



Home-Made Weed Killer

Boil a litre of water, add 2 tablespoons of salt and 5 tablespoons of vinegar. Pour directly on weeds on sidewalks, driveways, etc. while still hot.

Garlic-Spray Insecticide

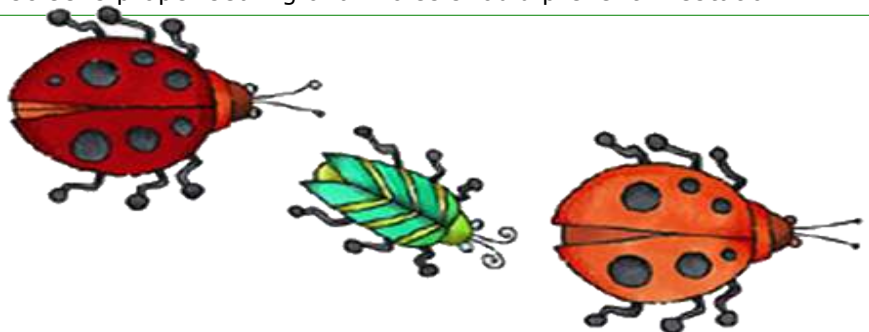
Pulverize in a blender a couple of whole cayenne peppers, a large onion and a whole bulb of garlic with a little water. Cover this mash with a gallon of water, let stand 24 hours and strain. Spray daily on roses, azaleas, and vegetables to kill an infestation of bugs.

Please note: While these recipes are biodegradable they can still kill beneficial insects - so use them sparingly!

What are the Alternatives?

The most important thing to remember about pesticides is that they are simply unnecessary! You don't need chemicals to maintain a healthy lawn and garden, and often pesticides will only make yard care more difficult by eliminating natural controls on pests. Here are a few tips for common pest problems in and around the home:

- Maintaining a healthy lawn has far more to do with soil health (try adding compost) than anything else - if you find you cannot maintain a lawn in the conditions available in your yard, why not consider alternate forms of ground cover - which can also save you time and conserve precious water supplies in the summer months.
- Natural predators in the environment can take care of many pest problems for you. To attract them to your yard install bird feeders and baths and bat houses. Grow herbs (such as coriander, fennel, dill, lavender, thyme, mint, and parsley) and allow them to flower. Also attractive to beneficial insects are flowers of the composite or daisy family such as goldenrod, sunflowers, and thistle.
- Most indoor pests are accessing your home from outside - installation of screens proper sealing of all holes should prevent infestation.



For more information go online at www.spec.bc.ca/pesticides



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