

Pesticide Free Gardening:

A How-To Guide to a Healthy Yard



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Pesticide Free Gardening

Pests are more likely to attack unhealthy plants. Like your body, if you naturally keep your garden fit, it can fight off all sorts of pests and diseases on its own. This brochure provides information on how to maintain a pesticide free lawn and garden.

What is a Pesticide?

Pesticides do not prevent pest problems; they only try to control them as they arise. Regardless of their origin, natural and synthetic pesticides are designed to kill. Pesticides include insecticides (insects), herbicides (weeds), fungicides (fungi) and rodenticides (rodents). Common ingredients include Glyphosate and 2,4-D. Weed N' Feed products are now banned in Canada.

And remember, just because a pesticide is labeled organic, it is still a pesticide and needs to be used with caution.





Ladybug Larvae—harmless to people, deadly to aphids

Why be Pesticide Free?

Members of our community have stated many reasons for going pesticide free including

- reducing negative impacts on people, pets and wildlife, such as birds, bees and dragonflies,
- maintaining healthy garden ecosystems by keeping beneficial insects like ladybugs and bees alive,
- keeping the food they grow in their garden chemical free, and
- building acceptance for a more natural looking yard.

Pesticides aren't needed for a beautiful lawn and garden. Safer and more sustainable alternatives exist!



Problem Solving

Learn to diagnose and identify which pests are harmful and which can be tolerated so you can effectively determine whether or not intervention is required. People are sometimes too quick to spray for insect damage that has been misidentified, is irrelevant to the health of the plant, or after the damage has already been done.

Try some of the pesticide free suggestions on the following page and only consider chemicals as a last resort. If treating with chemicals, natural or synthetic, always use them sparingly and with extreme caution, read the label thoroughly, and only use them for their intended purpose.

The Gardenline website provides resources for pest identification, diagnostics and treatment at **gardenline.usask.ca**. For personal, expert advice regarding plant diagnostics and treatment, call 306.966.5865 or email gardenline@usask.ca to consult with a professional horticulturalist at the University of Saskatchewan. The Gardenline service is free and available from May to September.

Pesticide Free Alternatives:

Here are a few chemical free alternatives to help you reduce weeds and other pests.

Lawns:

- Plant native grasses. They are adapted to our Saskatchewan climate.
- Apply compost to your lawn to keep it healthy.
- Use a sharp mower blade.
- Raise the mower blade to keep grass two to four inches tall.
- Keep thatch a half inch thick.
- Water only as needed—a good soaking of one inch per week is better than frequent shallow watering.
- Remove weeds before they go to seed.
- Learn about Grasscycling to improve the health of your lawn.

Trees and Shrubs:

- Remove infested or infected leaves by hand or with a clean, sharp pair of garden shears. Diseases such as black knot can spread by contaminated pruning shears.
- In late fall or early spring, prune infested, infected or damaged branches.
- Pruning can encourage some diseases to spread, so know what you are dealing with.
- Elm cannot be pruned from April 1 to August 31 due to a provincially legislated ban to help prevent Dutch Elm Disease.



Vegetable and Flower Gardens:

- Remove weeds before they go to seed. Whenever possible, dig out weeds by hand.
- Remove infested leaves by hand or with a clean, sharp pair of garden shears.
- Rotate annual crops each year to prevent the soil from becoming depleted of nutrients and to control soil-borne diseases.

For more advice on how to naturally manage weeds, insects, and other pests, visit bepesticidefree.ca or consider taking a gardening workshop on the University of Saskatchewan campus for hands on, local information taught by professionals.

Gardening at the U of S

For gardening classes for the beginner through to certification, go to gardening.usask.ca. Take a class, join a free horticultural tour, or enrol in our Gardening 101 series to walk you through your first year.

City of Saskatoon

Having a healthy yard and garden benefits you and your community. For tips on water conservation, backyard composting, pesticide reduction, and more, visit saskatoon.ca/healthyyards.

Questions?

Get free, local gardening advice from the University of Saskatchewan's Gardenline at gardenline.usask.ca year round. During the growing season contact a horticulturist for personalized advice at gardenline@usask.ca.

Community gardening can be an excellent option for every type of gardener, particularly those with limited garden space. To join an existing community garden, or to start one yourself, visit: chep.org/en/programs/community-gardening.

Grow a Greener Saskatoon