

Lawn Care Products



The Professional Lawn Care Association of America has compiled the information below to help you keep your lawn healthy, attractive, and environmentally safe.

How safe are the lawn care pesticides used by lawn care professionals and homeowners?

Homeowners should be aware that the use of pesticides, (a generic term for insecticides, fungicides, and herbicides), does pose some risk and can not be made completely safe. The level of risk posed by a chemical depends on its toxicity and the level of exposure. Improper or inappropriate use of pesticides and other lawn care products by either the owner or the lawn care professional can increase the level of exposure, which in turn increases the level of risk posed to human health and the environment.

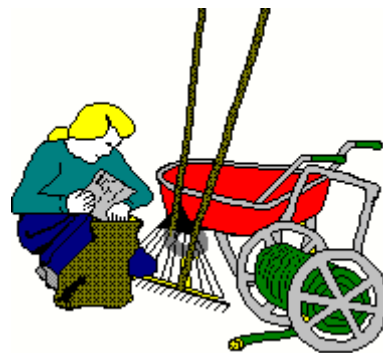
The simplest way to minimize any risks to you, your family, the wildlife, and the groundwater is to limit your exposure to pesticides. If you apply pesticides yourself, read the entire label and follow all the instructions. Read and meet the protective clothing requirements. Be sure to store all pesticides, in their original container, securely, and out of the reach of children and pets. Regardless of whether you are a professional or a do-it-yourselfer, keep people, pets, and wildlife off the treated lawn immediately following use. Stay off the lawn until the area has thoroughly dried, or, if possible, 24 hours following an application.

Try to use liquid pesticides, because the wildlife can eat the granular pesticide, become ill, and even die from over exposure. Long-term exposure can lead to severe birth defects in the wildlife, as well. If you must use a granular pesticide, some require that they be 'watered in'. In this case, the area should not be entered until after the watering is completed and the area is completely dry. Once granular pesticides are applied, water them in immediately, so as to prevent wildlife from eating the granules.

What do the terms "natural" and "organic" mean with regard to lawn care products?

There are no universally accepted definitions, but possible definitions of these terms are:

- ◆ **Natural** - A product derived from animal/biological, mineral or plant sources, in a form substantially as it occurs in nature. The materials may be altered or manipulated to put them in a physical form that allows them to be efficiently used in the application process by the homeowner or professional.
- ◆ **Organic** - Any substance containing the element carbon is, by technical definition, organic. Both naturally occurring and man-made products may be organic. This may cause the non-technical user to believe that a man-made organic material is natural, when it is not.
- ◆ **Natural-Based** - Generally used to describe a mixture of materials that may be properly described as 'natural'. The portion that is 'natural' is not usually defined; the other portion may be man-made pesticides or fertilizers.
- ◆ **Organic-Based** - Generally used to describe a mixture of materials that includes some organic materials. The portion of the product that is both organic and natural is frequently undefined; the other portion may be man-made pesticides or fertilizers.



It is important to remember that 'natural' or 'organic' products are not free from risk. If any of the above items are used by your lawn care professional, ask what they mean. You may also want to ask some of the following questions:

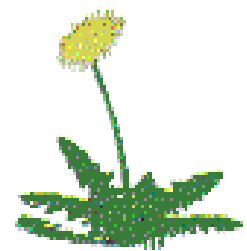
- ◆ Do the pesticides or services rendered contain or use any materials that are subject to EPA or State regulation and registration? Any product claiming to prevent, destroy, repel, or mitigate any pest (insect, weed, or disease) requires both State and EPA registration and is classified as a pesticide. There are a few chemicals that are non-regulated.
- ◆ Are these materials man-made or naturally-occurring? What are the risks posed by each?
- ◆ Are weed, insect, and disease control a part of the product or service?
- ◆ What proportion or percentage (25%, 50%) of the active ingredients and of the total application are man-made materials?

What are the rules of proper lawn care pesticide use?

A healthy lawn can out-compete most weeds, survive most insect attacks, and fend off most diseases before these problems get the upper hand. Pesticides are meant to kill or control weeds, non-beneficial insects, and fungal and other diseases. The benefit of pesticides is their ability to stop a pest problem that has become out of control and threatens the health of your lawn. A healthy lawn leads to less use of pesticide products, which helps to protect the groundwater, your family, and the wildlife!

Remember that all pesticides do pose some risk and their use cannot be made completely safe. You should not be tempted to rely solely on pesticides as quick-fix solutions to lawn problems. Serious pest problems are often a sign that your lawn is not getting everything it needs. The pests are symptoms of an underlying problem. You need to correct the problem at the same time you control the pests. Keep in mind:

- ◆ A pesticide is not harmless. Read the entire label and follow the label directions completely (including application rates and techniques, all safety precautions, protective clothing, and precautions to minimize potential exposure to the materials).
- ◆ Use pesticides to control pests, since it is usually impossible to eradicate them. Be sure you identify the pest, so you can choose the best pesticide for the job.
- ◆ Spot treat whenever possible! Applying more than you need is wasteful and environmentally unsound!
- ◆ Treat problems early. You will have more options and better results if you stop pests before they become strongly entrenched.
- ◆ Store all pesticides in their original container, in a safe place, and away from children and pests.
- ◆ Wash clothing worn during the application separately from the rest of the wash. Store clothing in a plastic bag until it is cleaned.
- ◆ Once applied, protect children, pets, and wildlife by keeping them OFF the lawn at least until the product has dried (24 hours).



If you have any questions about lawn care or pesticide use, please contact the Jefferson County Cooperative Extension Service (502-569-2344). For questions about how to protect the groundwater in your area, contact:



Wellhead Protection Specialist ◆ Louisville Water Company
550 S. 3rd Street ◆ Louisville, KY 40202 ◆ 502-569-3600, ext. 1809

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