

# FACT SHEET



## Pesticide Use

Overuse of pesticides (weed and bug killers) can cause damage to plant and soil health. Studies find increased health risks among families that used lawn and garden pesticides, especially among pets and children. Understanding the underlying cause of problems in your lawn and garden will make it easier to restore them to a healthier condition.



- Select pest-resistant plants, and put them in the appropriate sun/shade and soil conditions.
- Clean up diseased plants and compost dead plants in the fall to reduce hiding places for insect pests.
- Pull weeds before they go to seed and spread.

*Before you can effectively manage a problem, you need to identify what it is. The problem could be incorrect pruning, mowing, improper watering, or other easily corrected maintenance practices. Or that bug you've spotted might be a good bug that eats problem pests.*

## Kids and Pets

- If you use chemicals with your lawn or garden care, be especially careful around children and pets.
- Children are vulnerable because their nervous systems, hormonal systems and organs are still maturing.
- Pound-for-pound of body weight, children have a larger skin area for their size. Exposure effects may be life long.
- Shoes, paws and clothes can bring outdoor chemicals inside. While they are designed to break down in sunlight, rain or soil, if they get indoors these chemicals can settle into household dust and carpet and remain toxic for up to a year.



Don't spray at the first sign of damage. Natural predators often bring pests under control but they need time to work.

- If pest or weed problems develop, use least toxic solutions.
- Mulching once a year reduces weeds in beds.
- Physical controls like traps, barriers, fabric row covers or repellents may work for pests.
- Beneficial insects that prey on problem bugs are available at some garden centers or you can attract them by planting a variety of plants that provide the pollen and nectar they live on all year.
- Use long-handled weed pullers that help pop out dandelions easily.
- Try less toxic products like soaps, horticultural oils, and plant-based insecticides.



- As a last resort, use chemical pesticides or herbicides carefully.
- Use spot application to get rid of problems instead of spreading chemicals all over the yard to kill a few weeds or bugs.
- Always follow the instructions carefully.
- More is never better.