

The Facts on 'Weed & Feed'

The Top-5 Reasons Not To Use Granular Forms of Synthetic 'Weed and Feed' Products

- 1. Granular "weed and feed" products are over applied to the entire lawn, not merely to areas of weeds, so are counter to pesticide reduction strategies. The mixture of fertiliser and herbicide is incompatible because one ingredient should be applied to the entire lawn, and one is intended for problem spots.**
- 2. Granular "weed and feed" products persist longer in the environment. They off-gas unpredictably over extended periods of time, so neighbours affected by the off-gassing, who have to leave their homes, don't know when it is safe to return.**
- 3. Granular "weed and feed" products stick on shoes and children's hands and are very mobile. Dust is carried by the wind and tracked indoors.**
- 4. The weedkillers (phenoxy herbicides) are contaminated with chlorinated dioxins. These persistent, bioaccumulative toxic substances are linked to cancers, and to reproductive, immunological and neurological problems.**
- 5. Birds eat "weed and feed" granules as grit. Quick-release fertilizers, commonly used in most weed and feed products, apply a quick and heavy dose of nutrients to the lawn, and are more likely to wash off into local lakes. This increases algae growth in lakes and reduces oxygen levels, killing fish and other organisms.**

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Province of Québec

On March 5, 2003, the province of Québec adopted the highest standards in North America by approving a province-wide ban on urban pesticide use. **Québec's new pesticide code goes a step further by prohibiting the sale of fertilizer-pesticide mixtures and mixed packages (i.e. weed and feed) which contain commonly used active ingredients in lawn pesticides such as: 2,4-D (all chemical forms), Mecoprop (all chemical forms), MCPA (all chemical forms) and Malathion, as of April 2004.**

*Source: Québec's Pesticide Management Code
<http://www.menv.gouv.qc.ca/pesticides/permis-en/code-gestion-en/index.htm>*

David S. Stevenson, Soil Scientist(Ret.)

Stop the sale and use of the popular weed and feed mixtures. **These products apply many times more 2,4-D than is necessary because it is spread all over grassy areas** while the broadleaf plants, like dandelions, usually occupy less than five or 10 per cent of the area. It is a lazy man's product.

Source: Penticton Herald, March 1, 2007

City of Moncton

Jim Moore, Supervisor Parks & Grounds

"Combination products, like the product Feed & Weed, have been found to be over-purchased by 67 per cent and nearly 53 per cent of purchasers are not reading the product labels. Products are over-applied to the entire lawn, not merely to areas of weeds, and so are counter to pesticide reduction strategies. The mixture of fertilizer and herbicide, for example, isn't compatible because one ingredient should be applied to the entire lawn, and one is intended for problem spots."

Source: Moncton Times & Transcript, May 12, 2006

New Brunswick Horticultural Trades Association

Jack Wetmore, Board Member

Avoid the fertilizer/herbicide-combined products, more commonly known as 'weed and feeds,' both men strongly recommend. Mr. Wetmore recently examined one brand and found a single bag to contain about 20 times more herbicide than needed.

"Weed and feeds are a half-baked tool that don't work, make a lot of money and put 10 to 20 times more chemicals on the lawn than are needed," he said.

Source: NB Telegraph-Journal, June 2, 2005

Landscape Ontario

Ken Pavely, IPM Turf Specialist

According to Pavely, **the home use of Weed & Feed type products would mean 417 times more 2, 4-D pesticides reaching the ground....**

Source: The Shield, March 1, 2007

City of Vancouver

Standing Committee of Council on Planning and Environment

"A person spraying their lawn with a weed and feed product according to the instructions will spray six times the amount of pesticide in a single application than would be used by a professional using IPM on the same yard in one year."

Source: Standing Committee Minutes, January 15, 2004

Canadian Medical Association

The Canadian Medical Association calls on the federal government to rescind the registration of combined fertilizer/pesticide products.

Source: February, 2005, CMA letter to federal Health Minister, Ujjal Dosanjh

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City of Calgary

NM2004-27 Granular Weed & Feed

Alderman Erskine and Alderman Farrell

WHEREAS the Hudson Decision was upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada granting the authority to municipalities to ban pesticide use;

WHEREAS granular weed & feed products represents up to 2/3 (by volume) of the domestic use of pesticides;

WHEREAS **granular weed & feed products are considered to be the most misused pesticide utilized by homeowners;**

WHEREAS granular weed & feed products are often applied improperly, by volume, at the wrong time of year and by spreaders that endanger trees, bushes and perennials;

AND WHEREAS the residual toxicity of weed & feed products in pelletized form can be washed into storm sewers, tracked into homes, and absorbed through the bare feet of people and pets, causing negative health impacts;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Calgary prepare a bylaw for Council banning the sale/use of granular weed & feed products in Calgary.

Source: City Council Minutes, March 14, 2005

The Ottawa Citizen

Ian MacLeod, Journalist

A notable exception to that end-product synergic testing is with weed 'n' feed products. The PMRA approves all of the individual active pesticide ingredients under the Pest Control Products Act. But because weed 'n' feeds are classified as fertilizers, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is responsible for testing the fertilizer components under the Fertilizers Act. **Yet no one, the Citizen has learned, tests the final, end-use weed 'n' feed products for possible hazardous synergies between their various chemical compounds.** Pressed on the issue, a PMRA spokeswoman said officials from the agencies are "right now, in discussion to determine who should be doing what to cover this factor with weed 'n' feed."

Source: The Ottawa Citizen, July 3, 2004

The BC Medical Association

Dr. Jack Burak, President

Products that combine a fertilizer with pesticides, commonly known as "Weed and Feed," are convenient to use and are becoming more prevalent. However, **using these products contributes to the unnecessary use of pesticides with the result that the toxic chemical compounds inherent in these pesticides can be harmful to human beings, animals, and fish.**

"Many consumers are unaware of the toxicity of these combined products and tend to spread them widely over their lawn when they should only be used in concentrated, problematic areas," said Dr. Jack Burak, President of the BC Medical Association. "For the health of ourselves and our environment, pesticide use should be a measure of last resort, and should not be used indiscriminately or even unknowingly."

Source: BC Medical Association Press Release, August 11, 2004

Los Angeles Times

Emily Green, Times Staff Writer

It's that time again that balmy stretch of late spring when America's war on the dandelion is in full swing. **The weapon of choice is the weed killer 2,4-D, most commonly mixed with fertilizer in "weed and feed" treatments.** Each year Americans apply an estimated 27 million pounds of it to parks, cemeteries, home lawns and anywhere else mown grass is found. A mix of three "phenoxy herbicides" called 2,4-D, dicamba and mecoprop typically blended together into weed killers and "weed and feed" products, they kill broadleaf plants such as dandelions while sparing grass.

Source: Los Angeles Times, June 1, 2002

Greater District of Vancouver - North Shore Recycling Program

Heidi Schimpl, Community Programs Co-ordinator

Fundamentally, we're out to promote good horticultural practices," said Schimpl. "Our premise is that if people adopt solid, natural gardening practices they won't need to use pesticides in the first place. This is key to having a balanced and chemical-free garden."

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To support this assertion, Schimpl notes that research shows that a full three-quarters of damage done to plants is actually not caused by pests at all; but are as likely to be caused by other such environmental causes that include: too much sun, too much (or too little) water, late or early frosts, cold or dry spells, and nutrient deficiencies.

Schimpl said weed-and-feed-type products for lawns (usually in pellet form) or as a combination product that kills weeds and fertilizes the grass at the same time might not be the best product for your lawn at all.

"People buy these products and broadcast them all over their lawns without realizing how detrimental they can be in terms of environmental health," she said. "These products are marketed to make them look benign, but people don't realize how bad they can be because they sit out openly on store shelves..."

Source: North Shore News, May 3, 2003

City of Calgary - Parks & Recreation Department **David Ellis, Parks Resource Management**

David Ellis of the city's parks resource management office says homeowners use six times more pesticides than the city, and that is largely due to the popularity of products that fertilize and weed the lawn at the same time. He explains that the products are generally applied to the entire lawn, so the herbicide is spread everywhere instead of just on weeds.

"It's convenient," he says. "(But) it's really unnecessary to use that much."

In fact, most of the herbicide never comes into direct contact with the targeted weed and, as a result, is not effective – the chemicals either evaporates or leaches away into ground or surface water, causing pollution.

Ellis says a lot of people think combination products will prevent new weeds from popping up in the lawn, but that's not true.

"They think it prevents dandelions from growing. There's really no capacity in that herb to prevent germination or future growth."

The city is asking Calgarians to avoid purchasing or using these products – some garden centres have voluntarily pulled them from their shelves – and suggests using a more environmentally friendly approach, such as improving the

lawn's health through proper maintenance and digging out the weeds with a dandelion fork. If people do choose to use chemicals, the city recommends choosing the correct one and applying it only when and where the weeds are actively growing.

Source: Calgary News and Entertainment Weekly, June 21, 2001

Health Canada - Pest Management Regulatory Agency **Lynn Skillings, Project Officer - Alternative Strategies And Regulatory Affairs Division**

The healthy lawns strategy calls for an assessment of pesticide product types available to homeowners, improved pesticide product labeling, harmonized classification of domestic pesticide products, homeowner education on healthy lawn practices, and enhancing the knowledge requirements of vendors and services providers.

Skillings said product types available to homeowners are to be assessed for compatibility with IPM principles and approaches. Such products include fertilizer-herbicide combination products, insecticide-fungicide formulations, broadcast application products, and products with multiple active ingredients.

Efforts are current underway to implement a number of recommendations for these products. Fungicide-insecticide formulation recommendations suggest insect/plant pathogen linkages must be demonstrated, and **the convenience of use should not be a strong enough argument for this formulation type. Skillings said their research has found that combination control products are largely incompatible with IPM principles.**

Source: TURF & Recreation Magazine, Jan/Feb 2004

Nutri-Lawn

Lawns that are maintained properly through regular care (i.e. feeding, aeration, watering, and mowing), should not require regular blanket spraying of pesticides, but only 'spot treating' of limited problem areas. **We strongly recommend that "weed and feed" products not be used, since they unnecessary blanket pesticides which are generally not required.**

Source: Advertisement in Family Gardening, 2001

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City of London

Combined fertilizer-herbicide products (weed and feed type) should only be considered if your lawn has a widespread weed problem that cannot be dealt with by other weed control methods (e.g., hand digging, spot-spraying).

Source: City of London - Lawn Care Tips

Greater District of Vancouver - North Shore Recycling Program

Heidi Schimpl, Community Programs Coordinator

Many survey respondents who use combination weed killer and fertilizer products like 'weed and feed' are unaware that they are applying pesticides. **It is also critical to inform residents who use 'weed and feed' type products that these products contain herbicides (2-4D, mecoprop and/or dicamba).**

Source: North Shore Pesticide Reduction Education Program: Final Report 2003

British Columbia Centre for Disease Control

Dr. Ray Copes, Director of Environmental Health

The real issue is the overuse of pesticides, especially weed 'n' feed products. "If you do have a weed problem in your lawn, deal with that, rather than treating the entire 6,000 square feet with one product which contains both fertilizer and herbicide. Selected application of the herbicide to the weedy area makes sense..."

Source: Ottawa Citizen, July 3, 2004

British Columbia Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection

Dr. Linda Gilkeson, Entomologist

In 30 years of gardening I've had gorgeous lawns and never used a weed and feed preparation.

Source: Kelowna Capital News, June 10, 2002

San Antonio Water System

Calvin Finch, Conservation Division, Manager, Water Resources & Conservation Dept., and Horticulturist

Weed and feed products are not recommended anytime. You are either wasting the herbicide or the fertilizer.

Source: PlantAnswers.com

Los Angeles Times

Emily Green, Times Staff Writer

In 1944, a weed killer developed in Britain for wheat farming was reformulated by the USDA for turf and launched on the lawn care market. In 1946, American Chemical Paint Co. released 2,4-D in a product called Weedone with the slogan, "This year have a lovelier, golf-green lawn." **By 1947, Scott had mixed 2,4-D with fertilizer into the first weed-and-feed combination. The company promised customers that they would "get as much of a kick out of putting pesky dandelions to rout as we have."**

Source: Los Angeles Times, June 1, 2002

Washington State University

Washington State University turf experts **do not recommend using a "weed and feed" combination product, because it spreads pesticide across the entire lawn when you might have only a few weeds.** In addition, a main ingredient in "weed and feed," 2,4-D or 2,4-Dichlorophenoxyacetic acid, has recently been cited by a judge as a contributor to contaminating salmon habitat. Spot-treat weeds, remove their roots and overseed with new grass.

Source: The Seattle Times, March 3, 2004

King County, Seattle, Washington

Weed and feed is overkill.

When you use weed and feed products on your lawn, you're spreading both weed killers and fertilizer. Think about it: you're putting herbicides on every inch of your lawn, even if you only have a few dandelions. **Many professional landscapers don't like weed and feed products because they waste money by using chemicals where they aren't needed.**

Source: <http://www.govlink.org/hazwaste/house/yard/lawn/chemicals.html>

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King County, Seattle, Washington

Weed and feed may harm streams and lakes.

Scientists doing water quality testing commonly find the three weed killers in most weed-and-feed products (2,4-D, MCPP and dicamba) in Puget Sound area streams. Even if you don't live near the water, pesticides from your yard could travel through storm drains-untreated-to the nearest stream, lake or Puget Sound. Quick-release fertilizers, commonly used in most weed and feed products, apply a quick and heavy dose of nutrients to the lawn, and are more likely to wash off into local lakes. This increases algae growth in lakes and reduces oxygen levels, killing fish and other organisms.

Source:<http://www.govlink.org/hazwaste/house/yard/lawn/chemicals.html>

Maine Board of Pesticide Control

Gary Fish, Environmental Specialist

Gary Fish, an environmental specialist at the Maine Board of Pesticide Control, who used to work with Chemlawn before it merged with Tru Green, believes **the combined weed and feed products, whether for pre-emergent fertilizer or for weeds are unnecessary and harmful to the environment. Fish said they use 20 to 30 times more pesticide than is needed.**

Source: *Blethen Maine Newspapers, April 10, 2005*

National Coalition for Pesticide-Free

Lawns

Declaration on the Use of Toxic Lawn Pesticides

Twenty consumer and environmental groups from across the country asked the national headquarters of Home Depot and Lowe's Home Improvement, two of the largest home and garden retailers, to carry a full range of organic, non-toxic lawn care products to protect the health of children, families, pets and the environment and **to reconsider the sale of "weed and feed" due to its hazards and environmental pollution.**

Source: *PR Newswire, April 13, 2005*

Hole's Greenhouses & Gardens

Jim Hole

Most of the misapplications of Weed and Feed that I've come across arise simply because the right product is used for the wrong purpose. And to be honest, it infuriates me that people's gardens are ruined because a salesperson didn't have the proper training to make the correct recommendation. I don't fault these salespeople as much as I fault the companies that retail the product, who often fail to provide anything beyond the most rudimentary training.

Source: *The Edmonton Journal, June 30, 2005*