



Take Action! Reduce or Eliminate Pesticide Use

Suggested below are a number of actions you can take to reduce your use of pesticides. Check off each as you complete it or incorporate it into your land-care routines. Set a target date for accomplishing all of the recommended activities. Explore the Resources and Links we've provided for further guidance.

- 1. ASSESS your use of pesticides.** How often do you use them and for what purpose? Do you use an herbicide to remove weeds from your lawn? Do you use an insecticide to get rid of slugs in your garden? Do you apply a fungicide to combat black spot on your roses? Are you using pesticides for aesthetic use only?

List the pesticides you use, the "pest" you are targeting with each, and your frequency of use. Be sure to include those pesticides that are applied by any lawn care or pest control professionals you hire.

- 2. QUESTION yourself.** Think about why you turn to chemicals — is it because you know of no other methods? Do you really have a "pest" or just a minor irritant? How severe is the problem — a few leaves or the entire plant? Do you have a spider or two, or an infestation of roaches? Can the "problem" be overlooked?

Chart the answers to these questions for each pesticide you've listed in #1 above and see where you can immediately decrease the amount and frequency of pesticide applications, or eliminate them altogether.

- 3. INVENTORY the pesticide products you have on hand.**

Safely discard those that you've identified in #2 as being unnecessary, as well as any products that are poorly labeled or discontinued. Contact local solid waste management or health agencies for disposal guidelines. State and local laws may dictate stricter guidelines than those provided on the label.

- 4. RESEARCH alternatives** for those pesticides you've identified as still being needed. The aim is to use the least-toxic method possible.

Visit our **You Have a Choice!** web pages to identify your options (http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/alternatives.html). Pick at least one option and give it a try. As you find success, cross the pesticide you'll no longer need off your list and safely discard any remaining product.

5. PRACTICE PREVENTION. Pests are usually a symptom rather than a source of a problem. Prevent problems that can lead to pest infestations by incorporating the following activities into your land-care routines:

- Remove pest hiding and breeding sites – inside and out. Remove trash and standing water from outdoor areas. Keep indoor areas clean and dry.
- Maintain healthy soil with the help of compost. Healthy soil contains beneficial organisms that keep disease and pests in check. Healthy soil also breeds healthy plants, which resist disease and are less likely to succumb to pests. This week, start collecting kitchen and yard waste and begin a compost pile.

- Grow the right plant in the right spot. Take stock of the plants in your yard; if they are not in the appropriate place, transplant them to a more favorable site. For instance, if the plant needs sun, put it where it will receive the right amount of light. If it likes wet conditions, plant it near water. If it's an acid-loving plant, make sure the soil's pH is appropriate. The stronger the plant, the less susceptible it will be to disease and pests.
- Plant native species. They are more resistant to pest problems because they have evolved under local environmental conditions. Explore ways to begin incorporating natives into your yard. Start by adding one or two native plants to your existing gardens.
- Make natural pest enemies welcome. Toads, dragonflies, nematodes, bats, numerous species of birds and other insects are your natural allies in pest control. Learn who they are and support them.
- Monitor your outdoor space regularly and look for early warning signs of problems. Determine whether damage was the result of insects, disease, nutrient imbalance, or misapplication of chemicals. Take the time to identify suspected pests and the reason for their presence: Was the fungus a result of poor watering habits or was the insect issue due to a plant weakened by poor soil? Correct the source of the problem rather than resorting to pesticides.
- Do not use pesticides on lawns or for other purely aesthetic purposes. Remember that your children and pets as well as birds and wildlife will be in direct contact with whatever is applied to the yard.

RESOURCES/LINKS

Healthier Choices: The Audubon At Home Guide to Healthier Pest Control
http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/pdf/HealthierChoices.pdf

Reduce Pesticides!

Audubon At Home web resources for responsible pesticide use

http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/reduce_pesticides.html

IPM: A Common Sense Approach to Managing Problems in Your Landscape
 Home and Garden Information Center, University of Maryland, Maryland Cooperative Extension.

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mc/services/dep/Grasscycling/commonsense.pdf>

PAN (Pesticide Action Network) Pesticide Database

Extensive toxicity and regulatory information for pesticides, including searchable databases of pesticide products, pesticide alternatives, and more.

<http://www.pesticideinfo.org/Index.html>

Earth 911

Search by zip code to find hazardous waste disposal sites and other home and community conservation resources

<http://www.earth911.org/master.asp>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
 Backyard Conservation Tip Sheet: Composting