

Headline: **Let it Grow, Naturally!**

Easy Chemical – Free Weed Control for Your Building’s Green Space

Publication date: March 2004

Publication: CHOA Journal

Written by: City of Burnaby

On October 20, 2003, Burnaby City Council approved a two-phase strategy to reduce the use of cosmetic (ornamental) herbicides on private lands.

Phase 1 consists of: *Let it Grow, Naturally!* — a campaign to educate residents and gardeners about safe and effective ways of managing weeds and other pests on their lawns and gardens.

Phase 2 consists of an evaluation to determine the need for additional measures, such as a bylaw, to further reduce the use of cosmetic herbicides on private properties.

As a part of Phase 2, a stakeholder consultation process will be undertaken to obtain public input on future program options and strategies.

By reducing the use of lawn and garden chemicals, Burnaby residents and gardeners will be helping to off-set the need for a future restriction.

Why?

Because a 2003 survey of Burnaby residents revealed that cosmetic herbicides (or chemicals used for controlling weeds) are being used more than any other type of garden chemical. As well, **building green spaces** are the most common type of area to be treated with cosmetic herbicides, after residential lawns. Building green spaces are also the most likely to receive indiscriminate ‘blanket’ applications of cosmetic herbicides, rather than more selective ‘spot’ treatments of weeds.

There’s more...

Rain may cause herbicides to enter into streams, lakes and groundwater, and wind can cause them to drift throughout your building’s common areas and beyond.

That’s why the Canadian Cancer Society, the British Columbia Lung Association and the Audubon Society all support reducing the use of pesticides and herbicides, especially when their use is cosmetic (or ornamental) and provides little or no health benefit to humans.

Play it safe...

Our common areas are our private spaces, but also part of a larger landscape we share with our human and wildlife neighbours

By letting your building’s green areas grow naturally — without using chemicals, such as herbicides — you will be minimizing potential impacts to you, your family and the wider environment.

For more information on CHOA resources and benefits visit www.choa.bc.ca
or contact the office at 1-877-353-2462 or email office@choa.bc.ca.

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Are You Thinking of Becoming Less Dependant on Chemicals... But Don't Know How?

Area Specific Weed Control Methods

Weeds on lawns: Sprinkle corn gluten meal (CGM) on grass to prevent the growth of broad-leafed weeds such as dandelions. CGM also acts as an organic slow-release fertilizer and is beneficial to your lawn. Specialized dandelion diggers are also available for full removal of emerging weeds on smaller grassed areas.

Weeds between paving stones: For larger areas, consider investing in a propane weed torch or water-powered weeder, available at specialty garden supply stores. Ensure that all instructions for their safe operation are observed.

Weeds over larger areas: Cover the affected area with black or clear plastic, secure to ground, and leave for 4 to 6 weeks (during warm weather periods). The resulting elevated temperatures will kill subsurface roots and seeds.

Preventing Weeds on Lawns

A healthy, well-maintained lawn is the best defense against weeds.

Seasonal Lawn Care: A Comprehensive Guide

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| 1. Winter | Test soil pH and apply lime as needed. Due to the large amount of rain we receive on the West Coast, soil pH can become very low. A low soil pH (less than 6.5) can reduce beneficial bacteria and cause nutrients to be tied up in forms that are less available to plants. |
| | Sharpen mower blades in preparation for Spring. |
| 2. Spring | Use a rake to gently remove thatch — the compacted layer of dead grass that prevents water from percolating to the roots. Rake when the grass is dry, but before seed-producing (seeder) weeds have emerged. |
| | Aerate the soil by removing small plugs of earth. This will decrease soil compaction, increase water absorption, and increase air circulation to roots. Avoid aerating during times when seeder weeds are growing as they may grow in the plug holes. |
| | Follow by top-dressing your lawn with compost and over-seeding with a hardy species of grass that is suited to your site conditions. |
| | Apply a slow-release organic fertilizer (such as corn-gluten meal) to create a stronger, pest-resistant lawn. Avoid using commercial fertilizers and fertilizer-herbicide blends that will expose you and your lawn to unnecessary chemicals. Many gardeners prefer using compost mixed with sand to improve soil drainage. |
| | Mow frequently and leave some clippings behind. Lawn clippings can reduce your need for commercial fertilizers by 25 to 30%, and reduce weed invasion. |

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| 3. Summer | Keep grass longer in the summer, never taking more than 1/3 off or 2 cm (3/4") at a time. This will keep your lawn healthy and weed-free. |
| | Water deeply and infrequently — about once a week (or as permitted by the Lawn Sprinkling Regulations in the Greater Vancouver Regional District). A lawn generally requires 2 to 3 cm (1 inch) of water weekly. Consider letting your lawn rest this summer — it will turn green after a few days of rainfall and save money on your water bill. |
| | Use mechanical methods to remove occasional weeds with their roots intact. |
| 4. Fall | What wasn't done in the Spring, should be done in the Fall. Rake thatch, aerate your lawn, spread compost or other top-dressing, sprinkle the seeds of a hardy grass species, rake in, and water. |
| | If you fertilize only once, fall is best — your lawn will have a head start next season. |

Plant Selection for General Pest Control

Diversify your garden: Pests flourish in gardens where there is only a single type of plant. Planting a variety of plants keeps the pests from settling in your garden and reproducing. In perennial beds, grow ground cover plants beneath taller plants and shrubs to out-compete weeds.

Go native in the garden: Plant native trees, bushes, flowers and grasses that are adapted to the local environment, and require less fertilizer, pesticides and water to remain healthy. Ask your local gardening centre about native plants (including turf varieties) that are best suited for your site conditions.

Advice from the BC Landscape & Nursery Association on Hiring a Professional

More and more landscape professionals have an environmental philosophy and are offering environmentally sensitive services. Look for companies whose members are designated Certified Horticultural Technicians (CHT), and remember to ask them the following five questions:

1. Do you consider the use of appropriate plant materials (ie. hardy, disease-resistant plants that are suited to the local soil and climate)?
2. Are biological controls considered? If a pesticide is required, is the least amount used and does it have the lowest toxicity?
3. Are yard waste and trimmings composted?
4. Are water conservation techniques used (such as mulching, proper planting and efficient irrigation)?
5. Are organic-based fertilizers or soil enhancements used to improve soil quality and fertility where possible?

Consult with your landscape professional for more great tips and advice on how to keep your building's green spaces pest-free, naturally!

For more information on the *Let it Grow, Naturally!* Campaign, contact:

City of Burnaby, Engineering Department

24-hour recorded natural yard care info line: (604) 294-7089

Engineering reception: (604) 294-7460

e-mail: engineering@city.burnaby.bc.ca

web-site: www.burnaby.bc.ca

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