

## How to Achieve a Healthier Lawn - 3/15/07

*This column is being initiated and coordinated by the Hingham League of Women Voters, as a public service, to inform the local townspeople of a variety of issues and constructive actions that may be taken to address various environmental concerns.*

The article below was adapted from an article written by Susan Boyd and published in the Hingham Journal last spring.

Spring is around the corner so can the fertilizer ads be far behind? Now there are alternatives to dosing your lawn with pesticides and chemicals. The League of Women Voters is hosting an organic lawn care workshop on March 17 from 10 to 11 a.m. at the Derby St. Shoppes in the management office meeting room. (see directions below). The guest speaker will be Dave McDonald of Summit Landscaping in Marshfield. Dave is an accredited organic land care professional who has helped many homeowners transition to organic lawns. This workshop is free and open to the public.

There are different reasons to discontinue pesticide use on your lawn. One of the most important may be the chemical exposure to children and pets using the lawn.

The National Academy of Sciences estimates 50% of lifetime pesticide exposure occurs during the first five years of life, and that children ages 6-11 have higher levels of lawn chemicals in their blood than all other age categories.

Children spend a lot more time running, sitting, kicking, rolling and tackling on our lawns than adults. Children also take in more pesticides relative to adults due to their smaller body weight. The vulnerability of children is due to their developing organ systems, rapid inhalation rate and their immature ability to detoxify toxins.

Pets are at risk as well. Back as far as 1991, the NIH found elevated rates of canine lymphoma in dogs exposed to lawn pesticides. One such study found that dogs whose owners used 2,4-D lawn products (a very common product) were twice as likely to develop canine malignant lymphoma.

Another reason to discontinue pesticide use is their presence inside homes due to drift and track-in. A recent study conducted by the Silent Spring Institute, a non-profit U.S. research organization found pesticide residues of a weed killer and insecticides inside homes due to drift and track-in, where they contaminate air, dust, beds, furniture and carpets, exposing children to levels ten times higher than pre-application levels. The presence of chemicals can persist in household carpet dust for as long a year.

If you still want a green lawn without all the chemicals please come to the Organic Lawn care workshop.

In addition, there are some great websites, and local resources to help you achieve a healthy and lush lawn. The following will get you started:

[http://www.environmentalleague.org/images/Pesticides\\_Report.pdf](http://www.environmentalleague.org/images/Pesticides_Report.pdf) - for an in-depth look

at pesticide use in Massachusetts.

[www.beyondpesticides.org](http://www.beyondpesticides.org) -for information and what to look for in a lawn care company

<http://community.turi.org/household.shtml> for some info on what other towns are doing

[www.gardeners.com](http://www.gardeners.com) - For your do-it-yourselfers or

[www.greenscapes.org](http://www.greenscapes.org) - information for homeowners and gardeners

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**Directions to the Meeting Room at Derby Street Shoppes:** Drive around Crate and Barrel to the rear parking area. Behind REI, look for the green awning that says Derby Street Shoppes. Enter that door and take the elevator to the second floor. Meeting room is right there.