

February 20th, 2009.

Letter to the Editor

The Salmon Arm Observer.

On February 10th, 2009, the City of Salmon Arm adopted a by-law that will prohibit « cosmetic pesticides » for private lands as of March 1st, 2010. One councillor has stated ... " *I don't want this stuff used in Salmon Arm. I don't like it.* "

From our point of view, the public is being led to believe that conventional herbicides are nefarious, and the alternatives are so much better. For example, we have carefully reviewed a brochure "Eleven Easy Steps to a Pesticide-Free Yard", which was issued by Salmon Arm. It is obvious that the information contained in this brochure is ineffective, misleading, incorrect, and even dangerous. Here are some interesting excerpts, with our personal commentary :

" *[For dandelions] dig out the entire root.* " A totally ineffective method of controlling weeds. There will always remain even the smallest root fragment to re-grow.

" *A pesticide-free lawn will encourage earthworms.* " Misleading. Conventional lawn care products will not affect earthworm populations.

" *A thick lawn will crowd out weeds.* " Incorrect. Once weeds are established, they will not leave, except with the use of herbicide.

" *Applying [acetic acid] gradually eliminates dandelions by weakening the roots.* " Incorrect. Dandelions will return over and over again. Acetic acid will need to be applied several times to obtain some weed control, whereas a conventional herbicide will need to be applied only once or twice per year. Moreover, acetic acid is a danger to all vegetation since it will destroy desirable turf as well as weeds. It also represents a danger to people because it is a skin irritant, and it is corrosive to the eyes. Therefore, this product may be deemed as a dubious lower-risk green alternative to conventional turf herbicides.

" *Healthy lawns [...] will out-compete weeds.* " Incorrect. Healthy lawns will suppress some weeds, but herbicides are still needed for complete control. Suppression is not the same as control.

" *Mow high to discourage weeds.* " Mowing high will only suppress weed invasion, and herbicide will still be necessary for control.

" *Pour boiling water on weeds.* " Dangerous. This suggestion represents a danger to the person carrying and applying boiling water.

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