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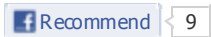
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Dandelions rule throughout Calgary

City policy restricts herbicide use

By Sherri Zickefoose, Calgary Herald May 21, 2012

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A bee lands on one of the thousands of dandelions in a field in Hawkwood. The community has been identified as one of the communities that is going to be sprayed with a herbicide to control the weed.

Photograph by: Colleen De Neve , Calgary Herald

CALGARY — Better get used to dandelions, because, for the most part, they're here to stay.

While the city does spray to kill the sunny, yellow broadleaf weeds in parks and playing fields, staff are remaining picky about which areas are treated.

“We don't have the resources to treat simply for cosmetic reasons,” said James Borrow, head of the city's integrated pest management.

“The sites we were looking at last year are already over threshold. Every year we try to become more and more efficient.”

Since last week, staff have been spraying the weeds in northwest parks in Hamptons, Hawkwood and Tuscany.

“We have an ongoing program, we go out and do an assessment, we build a list of areas that require treatment. Whatever we're treating this year was assessed the year before last or last year,” Borrow said.

The city stopped spraying for cosmetic or beautification purposes in 1998, when its integrated pest management plan was approved by council. The city uses pesticides only when weeds threaten the long-term health of the landscape.

The city assesses all parks approximately once every three years to determine broadleaf weed infestation.

Health and safety factors determine where the city sprays.

Soccer pitches full of yellow flowers are more slippery, which can cause players to slip and fall.

Left to spread, weeds can outgrow turf, which is costly to bring back.

“When we’re out doing weed control work, our focus is broad leaf weeds in turf. Eventually the weeds can outgrow the turf, so we want to protect the value of that public asset,” Borrow said.

Since the government of Alberta reclassified dandelions, removing them from the list of noxious weeds, they remain a lower priority for treatment than they were in 2010. As a result, city bylaw officers can no longer ticket homeowners who allow dandelions to flourish. Bylaw can hand out infractions if the weeds grow taller than 15 centimetres, the maximum height grass is allowed to grow in Calgary.

In the summer of 2010, the city handed out more than 300 tickets for lawn-care problems, based on 5,000 complaints received.

“Dandelions, because they have such a pretty yellow flower, they’re the ones that most people see most of the time,” Borrow said.

All herbicides and pesticides are carefully chosen to be the least toxic to off-target plants and animals, he said. They are certified by both the federal and provincial governments.


Calgary does have pesticide-free parks.

The city posts signs in communities before spraying. Staff are directed not to spray within 30 metres of a playground unless the entire area is closed to the public, and school sites are skipped when classes are in session.

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A bee lands on one of the thousands of dandelions in a field in Hawkwood. The community has been identified as one of the communities that is going to be sprayed with a herbicide to control the weed.

Photograph by: Colleen De Neve, Calgary Herald

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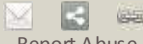
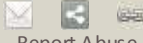
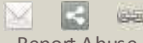


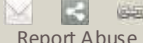

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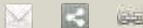




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<p>chth 11:59 AM on 5/22/2012</p> <p>Don't find dandelions to be that big of an issue, and do not find them all that unsightly-I find some of the shrubs and flowers people plant to be more unaesthetic.</p> <p>With regard to allergies, my husband is allergic to the fluff from poplars as are many other people, should we, therefore, chop them all down.</p>	<p>Score: 0</p> <p> </p> <p>Report Abuse</p>	
<p>Nessa 9:16 AM on 5/22/2012</p> <p>I think they're pretty, and as far as allergies go - mine flare up regardless of whether there are dandelions around or not.</p>	<p>Score: -1</p> <p> </p> <p>Report Abuse</p>	
<p>eagleboy18 8:03 AM on 5/22/2012</p> <p>nothing grows in calgary 9 months out of the year. I think we should be excited about any vegetation that springs out of our inhospitable climate.</p>	<p>Score: -1</p> <p> </p> <p>Report Abuse</p>	
<p>Rick__54 6:51 AM on 5/22/2012</p>	<p>Score: 2</p> <p> </p> <p>Report Abuse</p>	

<p>We live across from a park, since the City has quit spraying our yard has dandelions. And we can't use weed and feed, thanks. The City leaves blow in our yard, I rake them bag them, and now the City wanted charge for extra bags. All that's left is to pick dandelions from the park, make wine and forget my troubles.</p>	
<p>anon490914548 Score: 1 5:12 AM on 5/22/2012 To all those people saying what is wrong with dandelions, just ask people who are allergic to the seeds that are flying about. You try having to carry a puffer with you when you go out for a walk, not to mention the burning eyes, etc.</p>	 Report Abuse
<p>The richest man in town Score: 1 7:22 PM on 5/21/2012 @character1: touche, and in my kind of way!</p>	 Report Abuse
<p>jimbo5 Score: -2 5:25 PM on 5/21/2012 Look, a way to get rid of dandelions, or at least keep them at bay, to pull or cut off the flowers. This method causes a little more work but it works without pesticides or pulling them out. The plant puts so much energy into flowering that if you keep clipping the flowers as soon as they appear the tuber under the ground eventually shrivels and goes dormant or dies.</p>	 Report Abuse
<p>S_Butler Score: 0 2:30 PM on 5/21/2012 @Gumbee Instead of relying on the city to pay people to take care of your neighbourhood, why don't you rally your neighbours to do it yourselves?</p>	 Report Abuse
<p>character1 Score: 8 1:35 PM on 5/21/2012 @The richest man in town One thing your comment overlooks is that grass is a good thing (even if you can't eat it). - Grass intercepts sunlight and evaporatively cools the immediate environment - Grass traps dust and airborne dirt, taking them out of the air and improves your air quality. - As grass grows it takes carbon dioxide out of the air and releases healthy oxygen. A 15 x 15m space can produce enough oxygen for a family of four. - Grass absorbs noise so it makes your environment quieter and more restful. http://www.grassisgood.com.au</p>	 Report Abuse
<p>The richest man in town Score: -3 1:12 PM on 5/21/2012 This spring I have already made three dandelion salads, and am currently drying a bunch of roots so I may make a tea out of them in order to strengthen my liver and kidneys. Figure it out people. They're nutritious and tasty. Lawns? Not so much.</p>	 Report Abuse
<p>hogged11 Score: 3</p>	 Report Abuse

<p>11:35 AM on 5/21/2012</p> <p>I live across the street from 2 Nenshi approved slums. The grass, dandelion and other weeds are already almost a foot high. This used to a nice neighborhood and most people took care of their property but are slowly moving out because of the slum conditions that the city is allowing to happen.</p>	<p>Report Abuse</p>
<p>DwnZ Score: -2</p> <p>11:02 AM on 5/21/2012</p> <p>Seriously though, what's wrong with dandelions?</p>	<p> Report Abuse</p>
<p>DwnZ Score: 1</p> <p>11:00 AM on 5/21/2012</p> <p>I for one welcome our new Dandelion Overlords.</p>	<p> Report Abuse</p>
<p>anon906793843 Score: 4</p> <p>10:41 AM on 5/21/2012</p> <p>Thinking in my next house I will copy one of my neighbors . He was tired od weeds and such so in this house his back yard is trees , bushes , waterfalls and big rocks & paths . Front done with trees & astro turf . No mowing + every fall he vacuums his front yard for leaves . No waste or expense watering his yard either !</p>	<p> Report Abuse</p>
<p>tiredoldman Score: 1</p> <p>10:37 AM on 5/21/2012</p> <p>I wonder if the city will deal with all the other noxious weeds now? Is it just me or does that nasty yellow clematis seem to prefer growing on city properties?</p> <p>As for the dandelions, try applying vinegar to them. They don't seem to like it. I said to heck with grass and turned my yard into a garden, with mulch, and don't have many weeds.</p>	<p> Report Abuse</p>
<p>Gumbee Score: 4</p> <p>10:29 AM on 5/21/2012</p> <p>If the City can't maintain the "green spaces" it creates, then pull them up and put down asphalt. And as an extra measure of prevention, stop putting them in in the first place.</p> <p>I've lived in this city all my life and personally I'm tired of the Mayor et al telling us what a beautiful city this is, as though if they say it often enough we will start to believe it. My taxes just went up (again) and my community looks like a cesspool.</p> <p>If I lived in Britannia, I'd get weeks worth of attention over some chopped down trees (which was very unfortunate incident BTW), but since I don't, I am forced to continue to live with the dandelion and weed problem (not to mention the garbage, graffiti & shopping carts strewn about).</p> <p>How in the world am I supposed to keep my property dandelion free while the adjacent City owned spaces are releasing millions of seeds on a continual basis?</p>	<p> Report Abuse</p>
<p>zuuul Score: 4</p> <p>10:28 AM on 5/21/2012</p> <p>The solution is to keep it watered well - not occasionally (the minimum of course is 1" a week, which is not enough to keep the weeds out). Dandelions and other weeds become rampant when the ground dries up and the grass becomes partially dormant.</p> <p>Just like with cars, maintenance is cheaper than repairs. Cutting back on costs to water the properties only leads to more costly repairs down the road.</p>	<p> Report Abuse</p>

<p>RayL Score: 1 10:23 AM on 5/21/2012 In Ontario, the likes of Premier Dad and Hurricane Hazel merely ban pesticides under the guise of environmental concerns. These concerns are most apparent when there is money to be saved, eg. in buying pesticides - less so when there is money to be spent. To insure the health of the dandelions, Mississauga Parks only cuts the grass after the dandelions have gone to seed - or so it seems. What grass you say?</p>	 Report Abuse
<p>character1 Score: 4 9:39 AM on 5/21/2012 @balzacbee I'm not a big fan of herbicide either - not at all. What is the solution? I have tried digging them all out but the roots are very deep and perhaps i miss a few. Guess it's dandelion soup for dinner again tonight.</p>	 Report Abuse
<p>character1 Score: 4 9:38 AM on 5/21/2012 So they are spraying just enough so that the weeds don't completely take over. That's quite a feat. I don't know how many parks there are in Calgary - but the micro-management of them is amazing. We have all had or seen what happens to grass when they get set in - we are working on this problem in our lawn right now and have been for the past 2 years. This is the lawn this house had when we moved in. We are now at the point where we either just leave them or we rip out the lawn and get new sod</p>	 Report Abuse
<p>balzacbee Score: 0 9:25 AM on 5/21/2012 I'd rather live with a flower, than the litres of pesticide There has to be a bioaccumulative effect.</p>	 Report Abuse
<p>Mr.C.Train Score: 2 9:13 AM on 5/21/2012 Jim ... You are ridiculous ... Inconsiderate dog owners... Not even close to what this article is about!... Anon.... Spot on.. Dandelions are a problem and they make our city look ugly. When I see dandelions on someone's front yard I think to my self... Well they don't care... What does that say about the city... We're getting ready for stampede and beautifying or city yet we can't get rid of these eyesores! I don't care how nutritious they are... They are ugly!</p>	 Report Abuse
<p>Taxmee Score: -3 9:07 AM on 5/21/2012 The City owned park behind our house is infested with dandelions that have spread to the lawns of the residents that border on it. For years we would have less than a half dozen of these noxious plants sprout in the spring and they were easily controlled. Many of my neighbors have now given up trying to control them, resulting in an ever increasing seed crop yearly which is now totally out of control. I am on the verge of tossing my dog's "natural" poop over the fence to help fertilize these "natural" occurring dandelion weeds that the City Aldermen seem to like.</p>	 Report Abuse
	

<p>talltower 8:49 AM on 5/21/2012 Dandelions are one of the most nutritious greens available. They contain higher amounts of minerals than the green you buy at the supermarket. Also dandelions return soil to it's natural state by balancing the PH. You don't see many, if any dandelions in nature, because the soil is in a natural state. If you don't like them, eat them, just be sure they haven't been sprayed.</p>	Score: 2    Report Abuse
<p>addywho 7:52 AM on 5/21/2012 That is a great strategy. Drive around and do an assessment. Most of the budget is spent on the assessment. Then by the time you decide, the dandelions have gone to seed so you have a job assured for next year. Our committee driven council members should be happy.</p>	Score: 4    Report Abuse
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