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Congrats to the City of Calgary...

for Not Going as Far as Many Other Municipal Bodies
by Art Drysdale

by **Art Drysdale**

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Art Drysdale, a life-long resident of Toronto and a horticulturist well known all across Canada, is now a resident of Parksville, British Columbia on Vancouver Island, just north of Nanaimo. He has renovated an old home and has a new garden there. His radio gardening vignettes are heard in south-western Ontario over two radio stations: Easy 101 FM out of Tillsonburg at 2 PM weekdays and CD98.9 FM out of Norfolk County at 11:40 AM weekdays.

Art also has his own website at <http://www.artdrysdale.com>

December 6, 2009



Art | 4 all your gardening questions



Art's 83rd voice blog post
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Congratulations to the Mayor and City Council of the City of Calgary--or at least a majority of that body!

The Council recently [in mid-November] voted to take what might be called a middle of the road approach to the cur-rent trend of municipalities (and some provinces) banning the use of chemical pesticides on gardens and lawns. The administration had called on the Council to provide them with guidelines of just what they (Council) wanted in a by-law that was to be drafted.

Overall, council gave the go-ahead in a 13-2 vote to develop a bylaw reducing herbicide use. Alderman Linda Fox-Mellway and Alderman Joe Connelly were opposed.

The bylaw still needs to be written, but administration now has clear direction. What's out is an outright ban. As proven in other municipalities, bans on the use of pesticides do not work because they are unenforceable, short of creating property police to patrol lawns.

The new rules call for tougher licensing standards for commercial lawn-care companies, the reduction or ban of herbicides that must be diluted, and those that are intended to be used over large areas.

The principles that will now be part of the bylaw include 1) banning products that are over-used, such as those that require dilution [read: hose-end spray bottles] and any that are sprayed over a large area rather than applied to specific spots; 2) A system to notify neighbours that a pesticide has been used will also be developed; 3) And there will be increased standards for those licensed to apply the chemicals, such as lawn care companies.

Here are some quotes that came out of the meeting:

"City council has found some rare middle ground that will reduce pesticide use while still allowing spot spraying." "Lawn care companies and other commercial users of pesticides point out these products, when used correctly, are not unsafe. But they are rarely used correctly by individual property owners."

"It's a ban by increments," Alderman Gord Lowe said.

Alderman John Mar said a complete ban would have "unintended consequences." He said there are too many unanswered questions, including the effect on golf courses and how much control Council can have over private property.

"Most important, how is this enforced?" he said. "We're creating something unenforceable."

"We struck the right balance," Alderman Diane Colley-Urquhart said. "Some people did not feel we went far enough. Others think we went too far."

"Council has planted the seeds for a workable bylaw that should create business for the professionals and reduce toxic chemicals in our environment, without choking the rights of homeowners."

"... it's not the professionals the Calgary bylaw wants to target, but ordinary citizens" said Alderman Linda Fox-Melway.

Here are two additional observations: "Lawn care companies and other commercial




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Above: just 29 years ago (!) I was able to visit the City of Tokyo for the first time; and since it was in November, the city's many

Chrysanthemum displays in various parks and other venues were on full view. It all started at the city's Narita Airport, and then on our way to the hotel I snapped the second shot here of a display about to be installed in a traffic island. The next shot shows a typical use by the local population of these displays; and then finally a typical park display, totally outdoors, but under a soft covering. Below, various types of mums are displayed, and in this group you see a few spoon types, a group of cascades, often loved the most by admirers, and one 'large' plant that has over 600 blooms on it (arising from one stem!). Author photos.



users of pesticides point out these products, when used correctly, are not unsafe. But they are rarely used correctly by individual property owners.

Council has planted the seeds for a workable bylaw that should create business for the professionals and reduce toxic chemicals in our environment, without choking the rights of homeowners.

Though Calgary Council's direction on this controversial topic is somewhat better than the bylaws adopted by other major (and minor) cities, I cannot say I agree with (one of the objectors) Alderman Fox-Melway, that they wish to target individual homeowners, and that homeowners and individual property owners "rarely use these products correctly."

In my 50 years experience with products such as 2,4-D, I have not seen any large number of "goofs" by property owners. In fact, when I started using them, there literally was no commercial applicator industry at all; virtually all usage initially was by individuals. There are always going to be users who don't read the label, and use either the wrong product (Roundup on a lawn for dandelions, for example) or apply too much, or at the wrong time. Fortunately, most of those errors result in the product not working, rather than a disaster such as the entire lawn dying due to the application of Roundup!

But, keep in mind, all of the expert scientists at Health Canada have continually given these products a clean bill of health, and we know just how quickly any trace of the chemicals disappears either from the soil or from water. It is the enviro-maniacs, virtually all of whom have absolutely no knowledge of these specialist products or just how they work, that condemn them. And, for some reason, city councils and other such bodies prefer to listen to representatives from small, loud, annoying "do-gooder" groups than the professionals who have all the facts at their fingertips.

One of the major objectors to the Calgary Council's direction on a pesticide bylaw was Natalie Odd, the executive director of a group now known as Green Calgary but previously known as Clean Calgary. In fact, Green Calgary is also the name of an alternative life-style store that sells stuff like baby body wash, belly balm, bottom's up spray, foot salts, luscious bum baby lotion, marijuana products, organic rabbit rattles, recycled toilet paper [wow!], stretch mark oil, and so-called green alternatives to conventional pest control products.

The organization likes to say: "Green Calgary has vast expertise in matters concerning pest control products, turf maintenance, and the green space industry!"

Don't believe a word of that people in Calgary!

The battle over pesticide bylaws is not going to end soon; and expect some highly interesting developments (think law suits etc.) possibly soon. I'll keep you advised.

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