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More on Herbicides and Pesticides

Surely you should not be considered a 'felon' just for using federally legal, effective garden products! Plus, is there now a retreat by municipalities who once wanted to ban cosmetic pesticides?

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>

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March 20, 2011

A good friend is about to move from a home with a reasonably large garden to a condo with only a balcony. When she sold her house she asked if I knew anyone who might like all her Roundup/WipeOut that she had in the basement. I said I knew several people who likely would be happy to have it, and not have to go the U.S.A. to pick some up. I e-mailed them, and they said, yes, they would love to have it, and in subsequent e-mails an arrangement was made that they would pick it up last Sunday afternoon after they attended a lecture at the Toronto Botanical Garden (they live well out of Toronto).

That all happened and they apparently ended up taking some other gardening items such as pots etc., and my about-to-move friend wrote a note thanking me for setting it up, and included this sentence in her note: *"I would hate to have tried to explain my stash to the politically correct."*

As I thought about what she wrote, it annoyed me that the current dumb-thinking Ontario Government (and appropriate similarly-non-knowing bureaucrats) have caused regular law-abiding citizens to think they are doing something the equivalent of committing a major crime by simply having Roundup/WipeOut sitting in the basement!

The truth, which is often lost, is that these are legal, effective, extensively-tested federal-government-licensed products that have good track records for doing what their labels say they will do. And, they have been used by thousands of gardeners and homeowners for decades with literally no problems!

When this current silly situation is resolved (and I certainly believe the law **will** be changed down the road when these know-nothings who have caused this are seen for what they truly are), and gardeners are once again able to use these products, perhaps we will see just how stupid the "banning moves" were and are.

Some examples of the rolling-back of pesticide regulations are already occurring. One example appeared recently near Guelph Ontario in the township of Guelph-Eramosa located in Wellington County. The Township partly encircles the City of Guelph.

After an impassioned plea from local farmers and weed experts,

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I didn't seem to have photos to suit this article, but since Canada Blooms ends on the day this item goes up on the site, I thought I would put in some old shots from the Toronto flower show. Above: the first three photos are from the 2004 show including Jeff Hogue's charming balcony garden, a very nice urn and a large horizontal flower arrangement in the Garden Club section. The next three are from the 2005 show: the unusual display of the company Earthwork, a lovely Phygellus (Cape Primrose) and a landscape display entitled "Far Out". The final three are from 2006: Show Designer, Columba Fuller's central display and red and yellow Gerbera with Philodendron foliage. Below: from the 2007 show: the City of Brampton's large floral pots were wonderful; these matching containers of Hens & Chickens were likewise and friends Larry Sherk (left) and Ken Brown at a friendly gathering after the show. Finally, from the 2008 show two shots of beautifully-crafted Canada Geese in one garden, and a nice herb garden. Author photos.

Guelph-Eramosa Council has agreed to reinstate roadside herbicide applications in rural areas of the township. Weeds on township roadsides are spreading to adjacent farmland, triggering higher costs for farmers, whether it be increased herbicide applications or increased tillage.

The township suspended its roadside weed spraying programme a few years ago. The situation is very serious, especially with a weed called European buckthorn, *Rhamnus cathartica*. European buckthorn has a competitive advantage compared to native trees and shrubs because it leafs out before most plants in the spring.

Weed experts are stressing that they are not talking about cosmetic use of herbicides, but specifically targeting noxious weeds.

If the township addresses weeds on its property along rural roads, less herbicide will be used overall.

Nonetheless, many of the pest control products used in roadside weed control spraying are the very same ones used in the modern professional lawn care industry.

One expert told Guelph-Eramosa Council that some manufacturers are not even required to put warnings on the product labels, because the toxicity levels are so low.

The herbicides in question are now even safer than road salt. The program will be started in Spring 2011.

A further example of these ridiculous bylaws being rescinded recently occurred here in British Columbia—specifically in the City of Salmon Arm. The professional lawn care companies in the City can now conduct business in an unobstructed manner.

On February 23rd, 2009, Salmon Arm's elected officials had legislated a needless, senseless, and malicious prohibition bylaw against pest control products used in the urban landscape.

Two years later, on February 28th, 2011, at a meeting of the City Council, readings of amendments to the bylaw included a number of new and hypocritical exceptions. Among these, elected officials gave city staff an exception status, and the go-ahead to use pest control products to treat infestations on municipal infrastructure. These infrastructures included hardscapes such as sidewalks, roads and boulevards.

Originally, when elected officials performed the first, second, and third readings of the new amendments, professional lawn care companies were not considered. During the City Council meeting, owners of local professional lawn care companies cried unfair. Dean Edwards of Salmon Arm Property Maintenance stood up during the Council meeting, and asked specifically if the elected officials were allowing themselves to use pest control products, and not letting "Certified Applicators" use the same products for the residents of Salmon Arm.

The Mayor addressed the question first, and then asked city staff for clarification that he was correct in his answer, and was advised that "yes" he was. The city could use the products once all alternatives had been tried on City infrastructure if there was an infestation.

Dean Edwards then commented that this was "typical".

The following week, and prior to the final reading of the amendments to the bylaw, it was finally decided to provide "Certified Applicators" with an exemption status. During the City Council's final reading, Dean Edwards had stood up at the end of the meeting, and interjected again. "What about certified applicators?"

The Mayor asked for clarification from city staff, who then advised that Edward's question would have to be referred to the head of the City's parks department. The owners of local professional lawn care

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companies were then taken aside, and told that they would have a meeting with city staff who would clarify the bylaw.

On March 2nd, 2011, during the meeting with city staff, the owners received an updated copy of the bylaw, which now included an exemption status for "certified applicators".

Henceforth, the professional lawn care companies in the City of Salmon Arm could conduct business in an un-obstructed manner.

And so it goes! There are other examples of reversing the trend of banning cosmetic lawn chemicals, particularly including the fact that in the most recent Toronto civic elections, a large percentage of candidates who had previously voted in favour of the City's own pesticide bylaw, along with some who agreed with it who were running for the first time, were defeated. On the other hand, many who spoke out against the bylaw (including the new Mayor) were elected to office.

In an upcoming article here, I'll be telling you about how I am apparently being parodied in an upcoming book by a so-called organic gardener in the U.S. who himself is a tax-evading government-apprehended illegal-lawn/garden chemical applicator and business-failure. If he wishes to put his so-called expertise up against my professional training I am only too happy to take him on any time.

Although I did not attend Canada Blooms in Toronto this year, at least I have not been banned from speaking at the show, as he was!

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