

Better Edmonton growing conditions create bumper crop of weeds

BY GORDON KENT, EDMONTON JOURNAL FEBRUARY 26, 2014



Improved weather means more weeds are sprouting in local parks that ban herbicides as total city pesticide use dropped last year to the lowest level in two decades.

Photograph by: Rick MacWilliam , edmontonjournal.com

EDMONTON - Improved weather means more weeds are sprouting in local parks that ban herbicides as total city pesticide use dropped last year to the lowest level in two decades.

The average number of weeds per square metre, mostly dandelions, counted at 35 Edmonton herbicide-free sites jumped from about five in 2010 to more than 20 last year, according to a city report.

The increase was mainly the result of more rain and snow following years of drought that hurt most plants in the city.

"We had a real dry period from the end of 2001 to about 2009-2010. Then we started to get more normal precip," Doug Costigan, director of the neighbourhood parks and recreation branch, said Wednesday.

"Growing conditions just weren't good."

He hopes the weeds will be kept down by mowing in the no-spray parks. This designation can be requested if two-thirds of people living beside the site sign a petition asking the city not to use pesticides there.

Edmonton's integrated pest management policy focuses on watering, composting, introducing insects to attack invasive species and other non-chemical ways to control weeds, bugs, rodents and other problems.

Last year, the city used 2,461 kilograms of pesticides, down 45 per cent since 2001 and the lowest amount in records going back to 1993.

The drop happened even as the proportion of Edmonton's 4,232 hectares of mowed turf sprayed with herbicides roughly tripled between 2012 and 2013, to about 10 per cent, because better weather meant more weeds.

By comparison, more than half the turf was treated in the late 1990s.

"We're basically committed to working with the community to maintain healthy neighbourhoods, and we're reducing our reliance on pesticides," Costigan said.

But the report, being discussed Monday by council's community services committee, indicates Edmonton faces growing numbers of pests that can damage sewers, attack trees and reduce biodiversity.

There's a concern that fewer safe, effective chemicals are available, meaning alternatives might have to be used that increase costs and require more applications.

The update was requested two years ago after councillors decided not to ban cosmetic pesticides following presentations by dozens of people on both sides of the issue.

Gideon Forman, executive director of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, is pleased fewer chemicals are being used, but he still wants the city to forbid them in most cases on public and private property.

"It's always a good step to see reductions, but the momentum in Canada now, at least in Eastern Canada, is a ban on non-essential pesticides," he said.

"There's no health benefit from them, and the science shows again and again they're very harmful to people's health, particularly children's health."

The landscape industry has argued properly applied pesticides are safe and effective.

The report doesn't discuss whether a ban is appropriate, but city officials have opposed the idea in the past.

gkent@edmontonjournal.com

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NORAHG RESPONSE

NO ONE WANTS THIS #@!!% DANGEROUS BAN NONSENSE THAT PLACES CHILDREN AT RISK !

By NOT IMPOSING A RECKLESS PESTICIDE BAN, **Edmonton** is AVOIDING PLACING CHILDREN AT RISK ! With PESTICIDE BANS, Green Spaces become PEST-INFESTED DANGEROUS GARBAGE DUMPS.

<http://wp.me/P1jq40-44g> <http://wp.me/P1jq40-4z3>

<http://wp.me/p1jq40-7C4> With PESTICIDE BANS, playing surfaces become THIN AND YELLOW, and OVER-RUN WITH WEEDS and INFESTED WITH INSECTS, resulting in the DISMAL DESTRUCTION OF SAFE TURF PLAYING SURFACES. PESTICIDE BANS cause HAZARDOUS SLIPPING AND TRIPPING CONDITIONS in sports turf, and children become SERIOUSLY HURT. Pest

control products PREVENT slipping injuries on sports turf.

<http://wp.me/P1jq40-2ha> Children need PEST-FREE SPORTS FIELDS to avoid FALLING and HURTING THEMSELVES. It is IMPOSSIBLE for homeowners or professionals to keep their properties beautiful by using so-called Green Alternative Pesticides and Practices. When it comes to PROHIBITION, Government Officials are THINKING TWICE about banning pesticides by looking at the experience of those jurisdictions that have suffered the hardship and STUNNINGLY EXORBITANT COSTS of this #@!!% NONSENSE ! <http://wp.me/P1jq40-43V> WHO CAN AFFORD THIS #@!!% BAN NONSENSE ?!?! In fact, there are REAL TRENDS AGAINST PROHIBITION. Children NEED PEST-FREE turf to avoid HURTING THEMSELVES. There are dozens of jurisdictions that HAVE KEPT CHILDREN SAFE by STOPPING or RESCINDING or LIMITING Anti-Pesticide PROHIBITION, or by GRANTING Professional Lawn Care businesses with an EXCEPTION STATUS. The TREND AGAINST PROHIBITION has continued again and again. NO ONE WANTS THIS #@!!% DANGEROUS BAN NONSENSE THAT PLACES CHILDREN AT RISK ! The following jurisdiction have KEPT CHILDREN SAFE — Alberta (Province), Altona (Manitoba), Ashland (Oregon), Beaumont (Alberta), Belleville (Ontario), British Columbia (Province), Calgary (Alberta), Campbell River (British Columbia), Chicago (Illinois), Durango (Colorado), Edmonton (Alberta), Everett (Washington), Guelph (Ontario), Guelph-Eramosa (Ontario), Kamloops (British Columbia), Kelowna (British Columbia), Merritt (British Columbia), New Brunswick (Province), Newfoundland & Labrador (Province), Ogunquit (Maine), Port Alberni (British Columbia), Portage La Prairie (Manitoba), Quebec (Prohibition Invalidated When Lawsuit Defeated Ban), Regina (Saskatchewan), Rossland (British Columbia), Salmon Arm (British Columbia), Scarborough (Maine), Saint John's (Newfoundland & Labrador), Steinbach (Manitoba), Stuartburn (Manitoba), Vernon (British Columbia), Winkler (Manitoba). **EDMONTON** MUST JOIN THE TRENDS AGAINST PESTICIDE BANS.

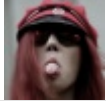
<http://wp.me/P1jq40-1JO> **EDMONTON** CANNOT AFFORD THIS #@!!% NONSENSE ! WILLIAM H. GATHERCOLE AND NORAH G

<http://pesticidetruths.com/> <http://pesticidetruths.com/toc/>
<http://wp.me/P1jq40-2rr>



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Norah G Fon

NO ONE WANTS THIS #@!!% DANGEROUS BAN NONSENSE THAT PLACES CHILDREN AT RISK !

By NOT imposing a reckless pesticide ban, Edmonton is avoiding placing children at risk ! With pesticide bans, green spaces become pest-infested dangerous garbage dumps. <http://wp.me/P1jq40-44g> <http://wp.me/P1jq40-4z3> <http://wp.me/p1jq40-7C4> With pesticide bans, playing surfaces become thin and yellow, and over-run with weeds and infested with insects, resulting in the dismal destruction of safe turf playing surfaces. Pesticide bans cause hazardous slipping and tripping conditions in sports turf, and children become seriously hurt. Pest control products prevent slipping injuries on sports turf. <http://wp.me/P1jq40-2ha> Children need pest-free sports fields to avoid falling and hurting themselves. It is impossible for home-owners or professionals to keep their properties beautiful by using so-called green alternative pesticides and practices. When it comes to prohibition, government officials are thinking twice about banning pesticides by looking at the experience of those jurisdictions that have suffered the hardship and stunningly exorbitant costs of this #@!!% nonsense ! <http://wp.me/P1jq40-43V> Who can afford this #@!!% ban nonsense !?! In fact, there are real trends against prohibition. Children need pest-free turf to avoid hurting themselves. There are dozens of jurisdictions that have kept children safe by stopping or rescinding or limiting anti-pesticide prohibition, or by granting professional lawn care businesses with an exception status. The trend against prohibition has continued again and again. No one wants this #@!!% dangerous ban nonsense that places children at risk ! The following jurisdiction have kept children safe — Alberta (Province), Altona (Manitoba), Ashland (Oregon), Beaumont (Alberta), Belleville (Ontario), British Columbia (Province), Calgary (Alberta), Campbell River (British Columbia), Chicago (Illinois), Durango (Colorado), Edmonton (Alberta), Everett (Washington), Guelph (Ontario), Guelph-Eramosa (Ontario), Kamloops (British Columbia), Kelowna (British Columbia), Merritt (British Columbia), New Brunswick (Province), Newfoundland & Labrador (Province), Ogunquit (Maine), Port Alberni (British Columbia), Portage La Prairie (Manitoba), Quebec (Prohibition Invalidated When Lawsuit Defeated Ban), Regina (Saskatchewan), Rossland (British Columbia), Salmon Arm (British Columbia), Scarborough (Maine), Saint John's (Newfoundland & Labrador), Steinbach (Manitoba), Stuartburn (Manitoba), Vernon (British Columbia), Winkler (Manitoba). EDMONTON MUST JOIN THE TRENDS AGAINST PESTICIDE BANS. <http://wp.me/P1jq40-1JO> EDMONTON CANNOT AFFORD THIS #@!!% NONSENSE ! WILLIAM H. GATHERCOLE AND NORAH G <http://pesticidetruths.com/> <http://pesticidetruths.com/toc/> <http://wp.me/P1jq40-2rr>

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Maurice Ryton

If the soil is alive with the microbes that all healthy soils have then the grass will grow well and the weeds will not. Chemical sprays kill just about everything in the soil and the soil now needs a chemical fertilizer to sustain the grasses. This further compounds the problem. Chemicals are killing the planet. Roundup is so widely used on this planet that it is now found in rainwater. These chemicals are causing many illnesses that the very companies who make them totally deny. Our planet has evolved for billions of years with weeds and grasses with little illness until the invention of chemicals that are now used everywhere. It does not take much to figure out what the problem is. Edmonton can find alternative ways to control weeds and protect the soils and the people from these deadly chemicals.

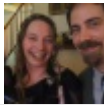
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Michael Kalmanovitch · Owner at Earth's General Store

Eventually a ban on pesticide use for cosmetic reasons will come to Edmonton and to Alberta on the whole. It does not make sense to use toxic products in this manner. Edmonton wants to be a progressive city - a city where a family can raise their children in safe communities/neighbourhoods. Allowing the use of pesticides that are counter productive is not only illogical but morally inappropriate. If city council say they are interested in the health of the citizens that elected them (as well as the dogs and cats that walk on lawns, the fish that swim in the river that are flushed with the runoff from our lawns, and the birds that look for seeds and worms in our lawns). Let's work to reduce the toxic load. Can we not work out something else than increasing the toxic load on our bodies and the planet? What works well for my small yard is physically removing the plants (mostly dandelions). Perhaps the city should look at hiring temporary workers from such service as from Bissell Centre to go and pick off the plants at timely intervals. This would also help to increase the funds flowing through this community. Just an idea.

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Kelly Green

the city's update on pesticide use is currently blank. but, under Edmonton.ca/goodgrowing one can find that the city uses an Integrated Pest Management program.

[Reply](#) · [Like](#) · February 28 at 7:19am



Michael Kalmanovitch · Owner at Earth's General Store

Kelly Green - yes they have been using this for quite a while now and the article above mentions it. The problem is that IPM also allows pesticides to be used in conjunction with IPM and some people feel that it is a smoke screen/umbrella to label something IPM while still allowing pesticides. It gives a false sense - actually a deception - of what is really going on.

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Sheryl McCumsey · Top Commenter

Kelly Green They have published a report that is available. http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/documents/Update_on_the_Citys_Use_of_Pesticides.pdf The Integrated Pest Management Program allows for the non-essential use of pesticides. 80% of Canadians enjoy the benefits of by-laws to control this use. Edmonton does not. Also, most homeowners overuse or misuse pesticides. We do not have any controls for this either. This is affecting human health and the environment.

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Sheryl McCumsey · Top Commenter

My daughter broke her arm while playing soccer on soil that was as hard as concrete. This is exactly the reason why we need to discontinue spraying on fields.... this is one of the many serious effects of using herbicide. It literally destroys the soil. Weeds are the only thing that can grow if you look at studies globally this has become a serious issue and we need to get off of the chemical treadmill. Cancer has increased by 27% for children and yet smoking has decreased by 9% in this province. Cancer statistics point to environmental causes and pesticides are a huge one. They drift and last much longer than most people are aware of (up to 800 metres and a half-life that can span over years). They bio-accumulate in the body. Both asthma and autism (500%) have increased exponentially and both are closely linked to these toxins. Polls done across Canada say at least 75% of the public want by-laws to control pesticides. If we live in a democracy and we do not want a collapse of our health care and our economies we need to look at this issue seriously and stop considering dandelions as something that will kill us. Cancer, birth defects, infertility, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, autism and even behavior disorders are all linked to the use of these poisons. Alternatives exist and this is being done across Canada with great success.http://www.ecojustice.ca/healthy-communities/backgroundunder-busting-the-myths-on-cosmetic-pesticide-bans/at_download/file

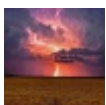
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Thatt Guy · Top Commenter · Regina, Saskatchewan

Your backwards on that, when weeds flourish they change the p.h of the soil. Grass absorbs the moisture into the soil... If weeds choke grass out, moisture is not absorbed into the soil.

Reply · Like · February 27 at 9:05am



Sheryl McCumsey · Top Commenter

Thatt Guy No, I am not backwards on that. Create an environment for the desired plants and they will flourish. Spraying round-up for example kills all the microorganisms in the soil. Says so in the patent. Weed resistance continues to be an issue all over north america. Use compost and over-seeding and aerating the soil creates an environment for the desired plants. Herbicides kill more than the intended target. They also put our children and our pets at a significant risk.

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Norah G Fon

CHILDREN ARE DOOMED

McCumsey is WRONG ! Her child DID NOT break her arm because of pesticides. That is patently ridiculous to say otherwise. In fact, it is now clear that pesticide-free jurisdictions have doomed children to suffer MORE injuries. Anti-pesticide prohibition transforms public and residential green spaces into dangerous pest-infested garbage dumps. <http://wp.me/P1jq40-44g> <http://wp.me/P1jq40-4z3> Without pest control products, children are at higher risk of suffering injuries with the creation of hazardous slipping and tripping conditions in sports turf. Government officials are inclined to avoid being officially liable for all injuries. With pest control products, children are kept safe from slipping and tripping injuries. With pest control products, children will not be doomed with serious injuries. ...See More

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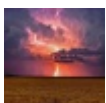


Barbara Louise · Edmonton, Alberta

There are many issues to think about with a herbicide and pesticide ban. As we have seen in eastern Canada there will be more "weeds", but most of these really pose no threat to us. Every part of the dandelion for example, is edible, and we regularly use them in salads! We have just got used to seeing a monoculture of grass, and expect lawns to look that way. My garden is permacultured and xeriscaped. I mulch the gardens and growing areas and have very little problem with weeds. The grass has been deliberately overseeded with clover and low growing herbs. It stays short and green and doesn't need watering.

Many people are becoming sensitive to chemicals. If we can reduce what we use that will be a good thing. Bottom line though is that we live in a river valley. Every drop of chemical that gets sprayed into the environment makes its way into the river valley ecosystem.

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Sheryl McCumsey · Top Commenter

I agree although I do not agree people are just becoming sensitive to chemicals. They are poisons and have known effects on human health.

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Thatt Guy · Top Commenter · Regina, Saskatchewan

Lets not forget about children who have asthma, and allergies... The pollen in the air from dandelions at times makes it unbearable for my own son to go into a park and play, and that's only one of the many types of weeds that flourish when grass isn't being maintained the way it should be.

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Barbara Louise · Edmonton, Alberta

Thatt Guy 40 years ago in my class at school there was just one girl who had genuine hayfever. Now so many kids are allergic to so many things. Just think a minute...the plants are the same plants we had then. So what else has changed? I believe that the changes are caused by us misusing the environment. We now eat food that is laced with chemicals, and the air and water around us is similarly contaminated. IF we continue to pollute, we will get sicker...

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Karen Parent

Sheryl's absolutely right. Plants are the perfect indicator of soil condition. If you're getting a lot of deep rooting weeds, the soil is lacking humus and will compact more (and get worse) if weeds are simply poisoned out. Mulching, grass-cycling, top composting are all things that will encourage soil health naturally. Very little of Edmonton's green spaces are designed with much more than esthetics in mind and without considering the soil, the water catchment, and plantings that benefit each other and the soil, we're going to have a lot more of these problems.

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