

Roundup In Montgomery Parks: Lawmaker Questions Safety Of Popular Weed Killer



Jacob Fenston



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Roundup, aka glyphosate, is one of the most popular herbicides in the world.

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Is the weed killer Roundup safe to use in parks and sports fields?

In 2015, the World Health Organization reported that Roundup, also known as glyphosate, is [“probably carcinogenic to humans.”](#) That same year, the Montgomery County Council voted to ban its use countywide, even on private property. The ban was [struck down](#) in 2017, and is currently being appealed.

Now, there’s a new effort to end its use in county parks.

Councilmember Tom Hucker (D-District 5) says even though there is [still debate](#) about the safety of

Roundup in the scientific community, there is enough evidence to make it a clear choice.

“We’re talking about whether you’d rather have weeds or you’d rather have cancer,” says Hucker, who recently [wrote a letter](#) to Montgomery Parks asking the agency to stop using the chemical.

Please sign our petition <https://t.co/6rBL3qI92t> to stop using glyphosate/Roundup in our parks. The pesticide gave groundskeeper Dewayne Johnson lymphoma. My letter to @MontgomeryParks: <https://t.co/D2AbKlVvMZ>. More info: <https://t.co/8eghI5hhsI>, <https://t.co/hhcPtIxfay> pic.twitter.com/XhYMwRvRTk

— Councilmember Tom Hucker (@CmHucker) [November 30, 2018](#)

Montgomery Parks operates 421 parks across the county. Currently, [11 of them](#) are part of a pesticide-free pilot program. Parks spokesperson Melissa Chotiner says the department is still reviewing its response to Hucker’s request. But she says transitioning all the parks away from pesticides is not simple or cheap.

“There’s no quick fix when it comes to getting rid of pesticides,” says Chotiner. She says the county has tried everything from hand weeding to propane flame weeding. “Alternative methods are time and labor intensive and can be costly,” she says.

Of course, one cheap alternative would be to just let the weeds grow, unencumbered. But that might not go over well with county residents. “Most people in this county are not comfortable with that. They expect the parks to be fairly weed-free,” says Chotiner.

But Hucker says continued use could put the county at legal risk. In August, a school groundskeeper in California was [awarded \\$289 million](#) in a lawsuit alleging the product caused his terminal lymphoma (the judge later reduced that to [\\$78 million](#)). Since then, thousands of other suits have been filed against Roundup manufacturer Monsanto. Monsanto is appealing the verdict. Officials with the company say Roundup did not cause the plaintiff’s cancer.

“It’s only a matter of time before the county gets sued for putting our employees and our parks users in harm’s way,” says Hucker.

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Jacob Fenston is WAMU’s environment reporter.

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