

Pesticide-Free Yards

Why we care

Homeowners apply more pesticides per acre of lawn than US farmers apply per acre of crops. Some of these are considered probable or possible carcinogens. Chemicals can affect children and pets, and can migrate into waterways.

Simple, positive steps

Lawns

- Mow often and leave the clippings on the grass to avoid losing nutrients.
- Mow to a height of at least two inches—tall enough to outcompete weeds.
- Dig weeds out when they are actively growing and the soil is moist. Remove flowers before they go to seed.
- If you water your lawn during the dry season, give it one inch a week; use tuna fish cans for measurement.
- If you need fertilizer, select an organic one that releases nutrients slowly. Avoid weed-and-fertilizers, which are harmful to humans and wildlife.

Shrub beds, flowers, and trees

- Heavy mulching around shrubs helps prevent weeds, keeps the soil from drying out, and makes it easy to pull weeds that do grow.
- Don't overreact to pests. Contact a [Master Gardener](#) and ask about non-chemical controls.
- Plant flowers that attract beneficial insects and trees that attract birds. [Click here](#).
- Keep it simple. Try washing insects off with jet streams of water, handpicking caterpillars, and trimming diseased branches.
- If pesticides are necessary, use the least harmful ones. See Metro's [Natural Gardening](#) book.
- If nothing is working, consider choosing a different plant for the space.

Take [Metro's pesticide-free pledge](#) and receive a free ladybug sign.

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at jeanne@earthleaders.org.