



School Pesticide Monitor

A Bi-Monthly Bulletin on Pesticides and Alternatives
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Vol. 15 No. 4 2015

Leave the Toxins Behind when You Go Back to School!

At the start of the school year, it is critical to check in with school administrators to make sure that students and teachers will not be exposed to hazardous pesticides used in the school's buildings or on playing fields. Whether a parent, teacher, student, school administrator, landscaper or community advocate, there are steps that can be taken to make sure the school environment is a safe from toxic chemicals, as the new school year begins.

For Parents and Teachers:

Because children face unique hazards from pesticide exposure due to their small size and developing organ systems, using toxic chemicals to get rid of pests and germs can harm students much more than it helps. Studies show children's developing organs create "early windows of great vulnerability" during which exposure to pesticides can cause great damage. (See *Children and Pesticides Don't Mix*: <http://bit.ly/kidsandpesticides>, and <http://bit.ly/PIDDlearning>) This is supported by the findings of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) which concluded that, "Children encounter pesticides daily and have unique susceptibilities to their potential toxicity." The report also discusses how kids are exposed to pesticides every day in air, food, dust, and soil. Children also frequently come into contact with pesticide residue on pets and after lawn, garden, or household pesticide applications. You can help to eliminate children's exposure to toxic chemicals by urging school administrators to implement organic management practices that use cultural, mechanical and biological management strategies.

Find out Your School's IPM Program

One way to best protect your child is to find out if your school has a pest management policy in place already, and identify key allies. Evaluate programs that are already in place, and if need be, work with administrators to create a new policy. It's important that your organic pest management program include a written policy adopted by the school district's board to ensure that the program is institutionalized and will continue to flourish years after key organizers leave the district. For more details and practical steps on how to get organized and improve your school's pest management program, see here: <http://bit.ly/1MDI2Nm>. For additional information, see our *School Organizing guide*: <http://bit.ly/SchoolingStateLaws>.

Don't Fret Over Lice

Just as children go back to school, newly reported research finds that lice in 25 of 30 states in a U.S. study have developed resistance to common over-the-counter treatments like permethrin. (See: <http://bit.ly/LiceResistance>) Given that there are no actual health effects associated with lice, and that the products used to treat them are so hazardous, there is no justification for exposing children to a neurotoxic and carcinogenic pesticide and elevating the need to consider nontoxic alternatives. Common over-the-counter lice treatments containing pesticides are both dangerous to children and ineffective at actually treating lice. Fortunately, this nuisance pest can be managed utilizing a number of alternative lice treatment methods that do not include the use

of toxic chemicals. One method for eliminating head lice is the use of hot air, which desiccates the insects and eggs, killing them. A second option is to handpick the lice and destroy them. *Beyond Pesticide's ManageSafe Database*, <http://bit.ly/ManageSafeLice>, as a comprehensive webpage dedicated to safe management of lice, in addition to preventative practices.

Pack Organic Lunches or Start an Organic Garden

Organic foods have been shown to reduce dietary pesticide exposure and children who eat a conventional diet of food produced with chemical-intensive practices carry residues of organophosphate pesticides that are reduced or eliminated when they switch to an organic diet. The effects of pes-

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Back to School

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ticide exposure have been well documented, particularly for vulnerable segments of the population like children and pregnant women. In 2012, the AAP weighed in on the organic food debate recognizing that lower pesticide residues in organic foods may be significant for children. (See <http://bit.ly/AAPOrganicFood>) The Academy also noted that choosing organic is based on larger environmental issues, as well as human health impacts like pollution and global climate change, a standpoint that is supported by Beyond Pesticides. Ask your school to adopt an organic lunch program, starting with organic produce, milk or juice. See, *School Lunches Go Organic* (<http://bit.ly/SchoolLunchesGoOrganic>), for more information.

In addition to serving organic food in the cafeteria, it can be both helpful and a valuable part of the lesson plan to grow food in an organic school

garden. For more information, *The Organic School Garden*, (<http://bit.ly/schoolgardenorganic>), or *Grow Your Own Organic Food* (<http://bit.ly/GrowYourOwnOrganic>) for technical advice). School gardens teach children where food comes from and establishes healthy relationships with food and the natural world.

Promote Biodiversity with Organic Landscapes and Turf

Biodiversity helps bees and other pollinators; diverse plants produce a supply of nectar throughout the growing season, and biodiversity of soil organisms promotes healthy plants that grow well without poisons.

Playing fields that are intensively managed with chemicals are at greater risk for disease and weed infestation (leading to a dependence on chemical inputs) compared with those whose practices build healthy, balanced soil. Similarly, chemically-managed fields are generally harder and more com-

packed due to a loss of natural soil biology, while organic management focuses on cultural practices, such as aeration, that alleviates compaction and provides a softer, better playing surface. See the factsheet, *Pesticides and Playing Fields* (<http://bit.ly/safe-fields>), for more information.

Protect biodiversity through organic turf, playing fields and landscape policies. Encourage your school to plant pollinator-attractive plants in its garden as part of its biology class. If your school does not have a garden, request one be integrated into the curriculum. Wildflowers, native plant and grass species should be encouraged on school grounds. See our *BEE Protective Habitat Guide* (<http://bit.ly/BeePHabitatGuide>) for more information on attractive flowers. Also see our *Do-It-Yourself Biodiversity* factsheet (<http://bit.ly/DIYbiodiversity>) and *Managing Landscapes with Pollinators in Mind* (<http://bit.ly/PollinatorLandscapes>) for resources on how you can help build biodiversity.

For College Students:

On college campuses nationwide, grounds crews and landscapers maintain the land with toxic pesticides, even though safer alternatives exist. For college students who are old enough to have a voice and want to work towards creating a safer and healthy environment, Beyond Pesticides has developed the *BEE Protective Ambassador Program* (<http://bit.ly/BeeProtectiveAmbassadors>).

BEE Protective College Ambassador Program

The widespread use of systemic pesticides in agriculture and landscaping, specifically, a class of insecticides known as neonicotinoids (neonics), has been implicated in causing poor pollinator health and widespread bee deaths. Beyond Pesticides created the *BEE Protective Ambassador* project in order to mitigate the devastating effects that neonics have on bees, and to create change through local, grassroots activism on college campuses.

With the fall semester rapidly ap-

proaching, now is a great time to take the *BEE Protective Ambassador Pledge*. After becoming an ambassador, Beyond Pesticides will provide you with educational information to help you begin a conversation with your administration about discontinuing the use of these toxic chemicals on campus this school year.

A critical part of becoming a *BEE Protective Ambassador* is to engage with your campus administrators in the creation of a pollinator-friendly campus. This means the eventual phase-out of bee-toxic, systemic neonicotinoid pesticides on all campus property. Learn more about the im-

pacts of pesticides and pollinators at www.BEEprotective.org.

“BEE” prepared: you may get some pushback about phasing out toxic pesticides on campus. But contrary to what some administrators and groundskeepers may tell you, a college campus can be maintained without toxic, systemic pesticides!

If you are a part of a student organization that is interested in joining the movement to protect pollinators and save the bees, consider becoming a *Bee Protective Ambassador* and sign our pledge at <http://bit.ly/BeeProtectiveAmbassadors>!