

From: Robin McLeod

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Subject: FW: "The Ripple" - River Valleys Committee - Ecological Management of Landscapes

River Valleys Committee: "The Ripple" - Ecological Management of Landscapes



Is it possible to manage landscapes without the use of synthetic pesticides? This has been a discussion occurring at City Hall and will culminate in a vote by City Aldermen, July 14, 2008 on an implementation plan to phase out the cosmetic or non-essential use of pesticides on public and private land in Calgary. Commercial food production will be exempted from the plan and most likely forestry, logging and golf courses.

There is no doubt that the use of synthetic pesticides to treat weeds, insects, disease, dying grass, etc has increased over time in Calgary. Questions to ask are, "Have horticultural practices such as aerating, top dressing with compost/loam, overseeding, planting native species, etc. been forgotten and replaced by the quick fix solution?" "Is the quick fix solution solving the problem or dealing just with the symptoms?" "Are we perpetuating a circle of chemical dependence rather than focusing on improving soil and plant health?"

For some, these may be difficult questions to answer. The method of bringing about change via a bylaw may be controversial. However, there is a definite movement afoot in Canada to choose healthy sustainable practices when it comes to landscape management. When a major retailer like Home Depot announces (April 22, 2008) that they are removing all traditional pesticide products from their shelves across Canada in favour of eco-friendly alternatives by year-end 2008 one has to start wondering? The Province of Quebec and Ontario have enacted province-wide legislation. Prince Edward Island and British Columbia are considering legislation.

Indeed it is a very complex issue. Both Alberta Environment Reports, sited below, recommend further study. Pesticides are being detected in treated drinking water.

For some pesticides there are no guidelines in place establishing acceptable limits for potable water. Medical research indicates low dose exposures to pesticides over time may be more harmful than high dose exposures. Conclusions may not be definitive however, considering the weight of evidence, erring on the side of caution and opting for best management, sustainable practices are viable choices.

For an overview on the "**Effective Management of Urban Weeds Using Ecological Methods**", Polster Environmental Services, go to: (www.parksfdn.com click on Preserving our Rivers)

[http://www.parksfdn.com/abcalasnpfc/doc.nsf/file/979CA526E4A9E99A872574820080E27E/\\$file/2008+Calgary+Presentation+Ecol+VM.pdf](http://www.parksfdn.com/abcalasnpfc/doc.nsf/file/979CA526E4A9E99A872574820080E27E/$file/2008+Calgary+Presentation+Ecol+VM.pdf)

Overview of Pesticide Data in Alberta Surface Water since 1995.

Anderson, Anne-Marie. Nov. 2005. Environmental Monitoring and Evaluations Branch, Alberta Environment

http://www3.gov.ab.ca/env/water/reports/PesticideData_SurfaceWatersSince1995.pdf

A Summary of Pesticide Residues from the Alberta Treated Water Survey, 1995-2003.

<http://environment.gov.ab.ca/info/library/PesticideTreatedWaterReport-95-03.pdf>

Byrtus, G., K. Pongar, C. Browning, R. Burland, E. McGuinness, D. Humphries.

2004. Alberta Environment, Environmental Assurance Service. Edmonton. 57 pp.

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The River Valleys Committee works to conserve, protect and champion Calgary's rivers, creeks, wetlands and valleys.