

What you can do to

# Reduce or Eliminate Pesticide Use on Your Lawn

## What's the issue?

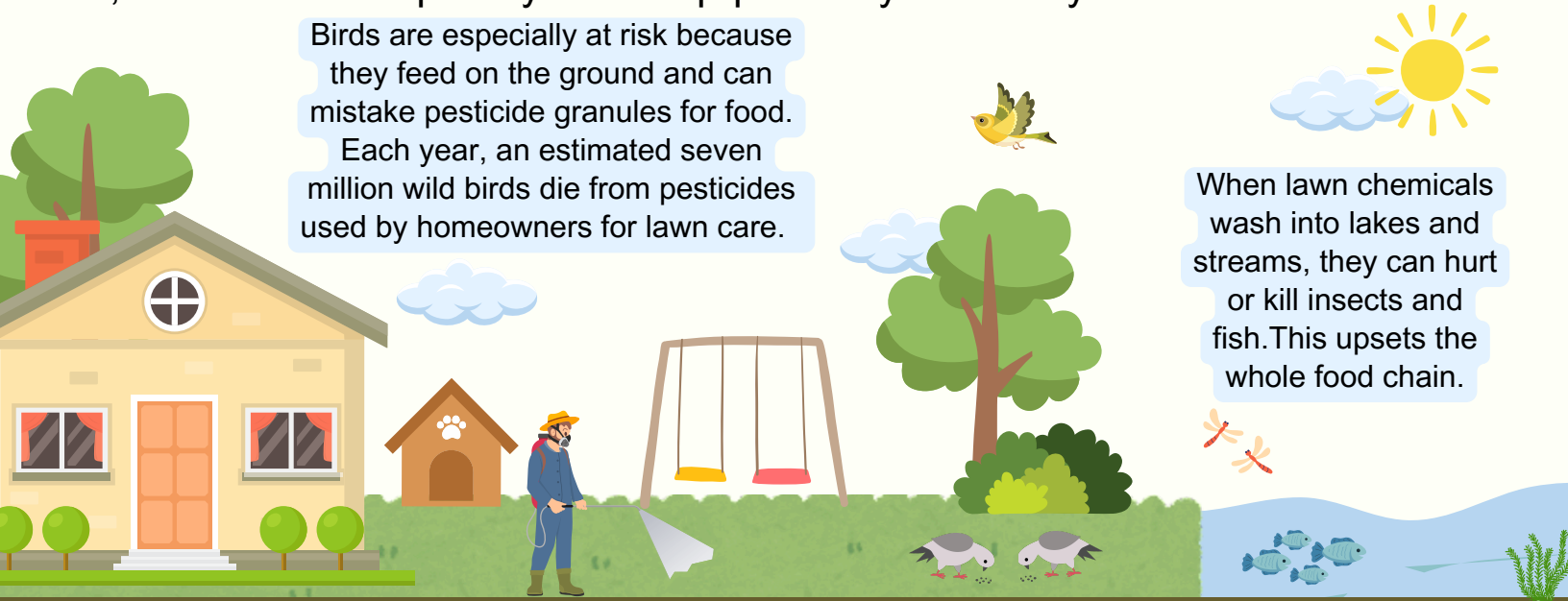
**Pesticides used on lawns can harm people and pets.**

Children, dogs, and cats are especially at risk. By following simple steps from the National Pesticide Information Center, you can reduce pesticide use, or avoid it completely and help protect your family.

Birds are especially at risk because they feed on the ground and can mistake pesticide granules for food.

Each year, an estimated seven million wild birds die from pesticides used by homeowners for lawn care.

When lawn chemicals wash into lakes and streams, they can hurt or kill insects and fish. This upsets the whole food chain.



## How to create a healthy lawn while reducing your pesticide use.

### Check your soil.

Have your soil **tested**. Follow the recommendations for adjusting your soil to develop a healthy lawn, with the right **pH balance, key nutrients, and good texture**. Use your soil test as a guide to make conditions favorable to turf and unfavorable to weeds.

### Eliminate or reduce pesticide use.

Maintaining your lawn without synthetic chemicals is easy and does not have to be costly. Make sure lawn products you choose are pesticide-free – read the entire label – if the product says it is a hazard to humans or the environment, it is best to avoid it.

### Don't just feed your weeds.

Use slow-release fertilizers like compost or organic options. Feed your lawn in the fall, when weeds aren't growing, to help grass grow stronger and outcompete weeds.

### Plant a variety of grasses.

In September, grasses grow fast and face less weed competition. Mixed grasses do better in sun, shade, and high-traffic areas. You can also replace some grass with native plants—they need less care, resist pests, and attract helpful insects.



**Don't cut grass too short.**

Set your mower to 3 inches. Longer grass handles drought better and fights off weeds, pests, and disease. Leave clippings on the lawn, they break down and naturally fertilize your grass.

**Water less often but deeply.**

You may not need to water at all. If you do, water early in the morning. Give your lawn one inch of water once a week, and be sure it soaks in without running off. In August, cut back even more; your lawn will bounce back when rain returns.

**Aerate your lawn to loosen the soil.**

Over time, soil gets compacted and can't absorb water, air, or nutrients well. Aerating breaks up the soil, helping roots get what they need to grow strong.

**Ask for pesticide-free care.**

Many lawn care companies now offer natural, chemical-free options. Ask how they treat lawns and check their references before choosing one.

**Eliminate grubs with nematodes.**

To get rid of grubs naturally, use beneficial nematodes, tiny worms that don't harm people or pets. Grubs are less common in healthy, chemical-free lawns, but if you find more than 10 per square foot, treat the area with nematodes mixed in water and sprayed on the lawn. You can find them at garden centers or online.

**QUICK FACTS**

- You can tell if a product contains a pesticide or herbicide when it has an EPA registration number. All pesticides are toxic to some degree; they are meant to harm or kill pests.
- Inert ingredients can also be toxic. According to the USEPA, many inert ingredients are also toxic.
- Pesticides often stay in the lawn and soil much longer than 24–72 hours, sometimes up to two years.

**What you can do to avoid impacting local water quality.**

- ✓ Read labels on lawn chemicals carefully and always apply products sparingly.
- ✓ Try using compost or organic lawn chemical alternatives. Composting creates an organic, slow-release fertilizer and soil-enhancing material.
- ✓ Landscape with native plants, grasses, and flower species whenever possible. A natural lawn reduces or eliminates the need for lawn chemicals.
- ✓ Use caution on slopes and lawn edges so fertilizer will not wash into nearby storm sewers or waterways.
- ✓ Allow proper drying time for liquid chemicals, and never use lawn chemicals before a heavy rainfall is expected.



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