A Guide for

Less Toxic Yard & Garden Care

"Put Toxic Waste In Its Place"

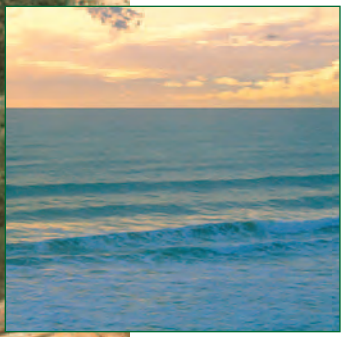
Visit: www.wastefreesd.org

Call: 1-800-237-BLUE

Brought to you by: The San Diego Regional Household Hazardous Waste Partnership

Did You Know…

"On average, homeowners use 10 times more pesticides than farmers do; spend (nationwide) nearly 25 billion dollars annually on lawn care products; and use roughly 67 million pounds of synthetic pesticides on U.S. lawns."



That is a lot nationwide. But there are alternatives to chemicals that can help reduce the amount of pesticides we use. Many times, these products are not used correctly. These products can harm trash collection personnel, contribute to fire hazards, enter storm drains and pollute creeks, rivers, lakes and beaches that include some of our most cherished recreational locations. These water sources are also critical to local water supplies and wildlife habitat.

To help protect and preserve our natural resources, 17 cities and the County of San Diego have come together to form the San Diego Regional Household Hazardous Waste Partnership. We have developed this guide,

which contains a wide variety of information including building healthy soil, gardening with companion plants, grass cycling, identifying beneficial bugs, plus many more tips. Most importantly, this booklet provides residents with information about how to properly dispose of household hazardous waste.

Residents can bring their household hazardous waste, free of charge or for a small co-payment to a nearby collection facility. There are a variety of programs offered throughout the region. Visit www.wastefreesd.org or call 1-800-237-BLUE (1-800-237-2583). for information about your community's household hazardous waste collection program.

The San Diego Regional Household Hazardous Waste Partnership is striving to create a cleaner and safer environment. So … read our Guide for Less Toxic Yard and Garden Care and remember to always …

Put Toxic Waste In Its Place!

How to Create a Fabulous Landscape that's Safe for You, Your Family and the Neighborhood!

San Diego County's climate and geology pose considerable challenges to lawn and garden care. Homeowners and landscape professionals alike confront the same set of hurdles… rainfall in coastal areas averaging less than ten inches per year and soil conditions ranging from sand to clay to rock. Lacking the sponge-like ability of good soil to hold nutrients and amendments, clay performs much like pavement, allowing applied pesticides and fertilizers to run-off easily. Sand, on the other hand, lets these additives flow through. The result is our lakes, streams and ocean end up with chemicals intended for our gardens and lawns.

Without healthy soil, plants may gain little or no benefit from fertilizers. And commercial pesticides often kill more beneficial organisms than pests, compromising the health of our neighborhoods in the process. Here's what happens… you apply pesticides and fertilizers to your landscape because the plants you're growing are doing poorly. Unaccustomed to this climate and poor soil, they are weak and susceptible to a variety of diseases. You water the plants and the chemicals you apply wash away with it into storm drains. The pesticide and fertilizer laden water weaves its way through channels and may end up in rivers, lakes and the sea, wreaking havoc on both aquatic and terrestrial life.

Some people believe all those nasty things that go down the storm drain are filtered out by some treatment plant. Unfortunately, in most communities they're not. The same chemicals you apply to your lawn may very well end up in the water you or your children swim in, miles from your home.

A few of the simple methods described below can not only help eliminate unnecessary toxins from

our local environment and yield a more beautiful landscape, healthier plants, reduced water bills, and even some protection from wildfires as well. A less toxic approach to yard and garden care is well worth the effort. This brochure contains many possibilities for you to try.

Upgrade your Soil

The first step in growing great plants and eliminating the need for pesticides and chemical fertilizers is good soil. Two inches of compost applied to the top six to eight inches of your soil will help clay soils drain, sandy soils hold moisture, and introduce a beneficial population of microbes. The improved structure of soil will allow root systems to sprawl, slow erosion, hold nutrients, and improve the overall health of your plants, making them more resistant to pests and disease.

In addition to reducing the amount of water required to maintain your lawn or garden, soil amended with compost may harbor microorganisms capable of breaking down toxic compounds already present where you're growing. So even if you've used some questionable products in the past, you'll be scrubbing your earth when you amend with compost!

Microbial Mulch

Mulches made from yard trimmings not only prevent weed growth, eliminating the need to apply herbicides, they also help prevent erosion, moderate soil temperature, reduce evaporation of water and strengthen a microbial community beneficial to plants. You can mulch with coarse compost, wood chips, shredded leaves, and even grass clippings. Use it and you'll water less and have healthier plants better able to ward off problems without the aid of chemical agents. Mulch is also great for controlling unwanted vegetation in areas designated for firebreaks.

Go Native!

Q: What do wild strawberry, California holly, coast live oak, California sycamore, western redbud, monkeyflower, and numerous varieties of sage have in common?

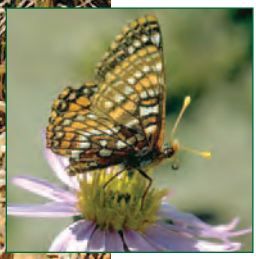
A: They're all native to this region, grow well, have a natural resistance to fire, aren't prone to pests and diseases, require little water, fertilization or pesticides, and look great when incorporated into a well-designed landscape.

Q: Why aren't you growing natives? "Too hard to find." Not true. Most nurseries carry native plants. A few specialize in them. "They don't look good." That's a matter of opinion, but be assured that a dynamic, beautiful landscape can be easily created using only natives.

A: Let's say the native plants aren't for you, but you wisely decide to amend your soil with compost and mulch your plants, trees, and shrubs. You're on your way to a healthier landscape. The nonnative plants you choose to grow may need some more help fighting off problems.

Here are a few more things you can do: Plant a Friend

By growing certain plants next to or near others, you can discourage some unwanted insects and encourage beneficial ones. Companion planting promotes diversity and a natural balance in your landscape. Intermingling native plants with nonnatives is one way to attract beneficial insects. Catnip has been found to repel a wide variety of unwanted insects, such as aphids, Japanese beetles, and squash bugs. Mint is especially effective in repelling pests, including fleas, aphids, white cabbage moths, and even rodents! Tarragon, nasturtium, garlic and marigolds are also excellent deterrents to many



problem insects. Beneficial insects can be attracted by planting a variety of items, such as: California poppy Native sages, Yarrow California coffeeberry Clover and many others.

Some plants both attract and are toxic to the same pests. For example, white geraniums attract Japanese beetles, which die after feeding on them. We encourage you to do a little research before you plant, and experiment a bit as you go, as choosing the right companions may not only help keep unwanted pests away, but also enhance the growth of the crops you establish.

Good Bugs

You can grow some of the plants listed above to attract beneficial insects or buy the insects directly from a supplier. Let's say you have an aphid problem. Coriander attracts lacewings and lacewings feed on aphids. You may want to plant coriander, or order lacewing eggs and spread them in your garden.

Beneficial bugs include:

- Ladybugs
- Praying mantis
- Parasitic wasps, and other insects known to feed on pests.
- Dill, fennel and prairie sunflower, among others, will attract ladybugs. Parsley and lemon balm will attract parasitic wasps. The choice is yours. Do a little research, ask around, and experiment a little to find the option that works best for you.

The Grass is Greener…

When you do grasscycling!

Every time you mow your lawn and discard the clippings, you're removing a substantial volume of organic matter, nitrogen and other nutrients your grass could be benefiting from.

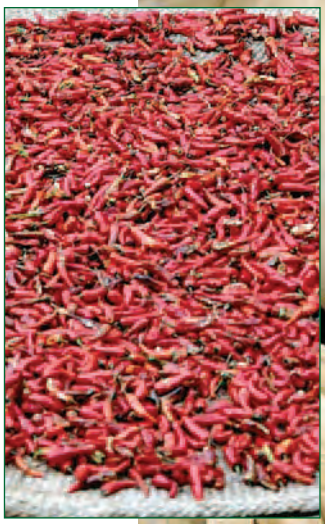
How does it work? Cut the grass and leave the clippings on the lawn. The key is to chop the clippings as finely as possible, something that can be easily achieved using a very sharp blade, mowing over the clippings twice, or using a mulching mower. A good rule of thumb for grasscycling is to cut your grass no more than1/3 of its length. This allows clippings to fall between the blades of grass and back into the soil, reducing watering requirements, pesticide use, and saving you money too! And by the way, grass clippings make excellent mulch for flowers and vegetables!

Create a Solution!

Some of the same plants that repel pests can be used to make sprays for foliar application such as:

- Garlic & Onions
- Horseradish
- Hot pepper or mint brewed just like tea and filtered into a spray bottle all work in deterring or killing problem insects.

Vinegar is often used by organic farmers for weed control. A few drops of mild, non-detergent dishwashing soap mixed with water also works for aphids. Once they're dead, rinse with fresh water. And speaking of water, sometimes a swift flow from the hose will wash away pests as well. Whitefly and ants can be removed this way. A quick search on the web or a visit to your local library will yield dozens of recipes for non-toxic, homemade solutions for pest control. Just as easily as running down to the store, you can concoct your own remedies right from home, saving money and keeping your garden toxic free.



Whether you make it yourself or buy it pre-made, compost tea has tremendous benefits as both a growth enhancer and pest repellent. Any mature compost will make a nice tea when steeped in water. Tea made from worm castings is particularly effective and can be used as a foliar spray or applied directly to soil. Worm tea also contains compounds that repel some problem insects and fungi, while providing micronutrients and introducing a beneficial microbial community to your plants.

Safe on the Shelf

Although it can sometimes take a little research to find them, there are some safer, more environmentally friendly products you can buy. Look for pesticides made from essential oils, mint, citrus, or some of the same plants you now know repel pests. Insecticidal soaps are also available and much easier on the environment than some of the toxic alternatives.

Get Friendly

When plants we call weeds and insects we call pests invade our landscapes, we often panic and scour the shed, garage or local store for products designed to eliminate them. A slight adjustment in perception can go a long way. We spend hours gardening, carefully pruning, watering, and maintaining our plants. We decide what fits, what doesn't belong, and how to adjust things so they're just right. But diversity is a fundamental component of nature, and our plants and animals have a unique way of blending together nicely without our help. A plant becomes a weed only when we choose to call it a weed.

Change the way you look at your landscape. Let it flourish, diversify, and grow a bit wild. If you want to remove unwanted plants, handpick them. Avoid the chemical sprays. Accept the random design of nature, and you'll find it beautifying your landscape better than imagined. Try some of the methods we've suggested here to create a magnificent landscape that you can enjoy knowing it's safe for your family, pets and environment.

Create a toxic-free home landscape, and delight in the rewards that blossom.

For Local Disposal Options:

Call 1-800-237-BLUE (1-800-237-2583)

or visit www.wastefreesd.org

Additional Resources:

Solana Center for Environmental Innovation's
MasterComposter
Program at . . . . . (760) 436-7986
www.solanacenter.org

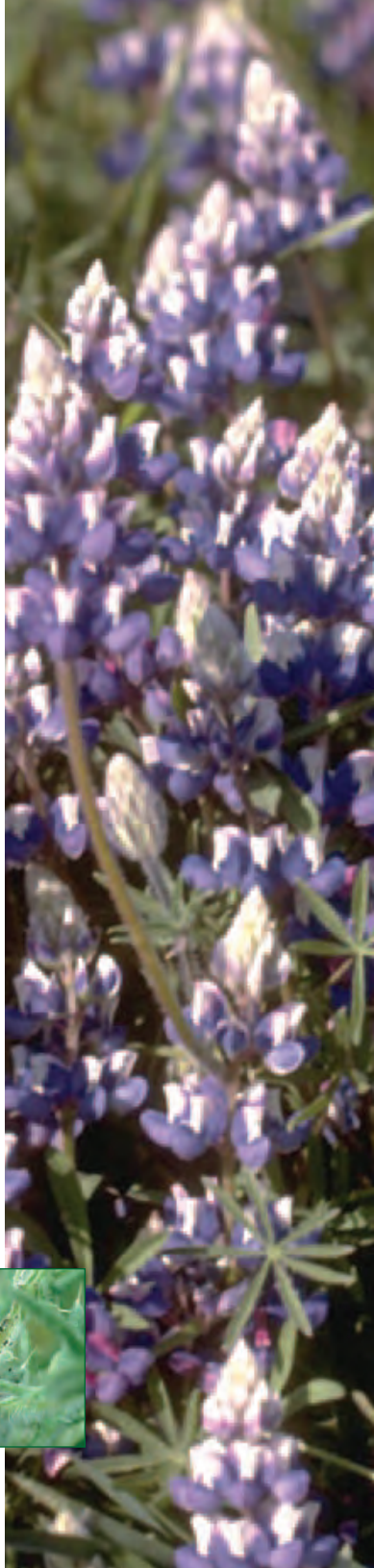
I Love A Clean San Diego
(877) R-1-EARTH (877-713-2784)
www.ILACSD.org

Central Contra Costa Sanitary District
Our Water Our World
www.ourwaterourworld.org

County of Los Angeles
Smart Gardening Program
www.smartgardening.com

Master Gardeners of California
www.mastergardeners.org

National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC)
1-800-858-7378
www.npic.orst.edu



The San Diego Regional Household Hazard Waste Partnership thanks you.

Participating Municipalities

Carlsbad	Chula Vista
Coronado	County of San Diego
Del Mar	El Cajon
Encinitas	Escondido
Imperial Beach	La Mesa
Lemon Grove	National City
Oceanside	Poway
San Marcos	Santee
Solana Beach	Vista

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Call: 1-800-CLEANUP

www.1800CLEANUP.org

Brought to you by the San Diego Household Hazardous Waste Partnership

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