

WEEDS AND HEALTH

The article for Week ending 4th of April about the World Health Organisation classifying Glyphosate as a probable carcinogenic raised a number of questions from gardeners one of which is 'How will I control weeds without having glyphosate'?

Now I maybe old but I do remember a time of gardening before the chemical was ever invented (which was back in the 80's).

I also told one reader that I stopped using glyphosate over 20 years ago when I found that it started to make me feel nausea after spraying and I also found it was the cause of skin problems on my dogs according to a specialist.

I do concede that Roundup and other glyphosate weed killer brands can make the control of some weeds much simpler and in certain situations I even suggest it as a effective control.

The concern that I have is the unknown amount of the chemical in our food chain and what harm it is doing to ourselves and children.

For the home gardener to be using a little around the section to control a few difficult weeds is not a real problem but for a commercial grower of produce to spray the crops we are going to buy and eat is a real concern. See my article at

<http://www.gardennews.co.nz/list.htm#GARDENING%20CHEMICALS%20RAISING%20HEALTH%20CONCERNS>

Carrots, potatoes, peas, wheat, barley crops sprayed with glyphosate to desiccant; which means to dry out their crops so they could harvest them faster or preventing them from going to seed as in the case of carrots while waiting for the market to improve..

Root vegetables such as carrots, onions and potatoes are where the plants store their goodness along with any chemicals they absorb while growing. Without tests to determine the amount of glyphosate in these stable stable crops we maybe at risk according to WHO .

So what do you do to keep weeds in your gardens under control?

Firstly if you do not mind using chemicals there are any number of weed killers available other than glyphosate but in choosing to use them it is better to keep them away from your food growing areas.

On the more natural side of things there is the good old fashioned method of weeding by hand, used successfully for thousands of years with no known ill effects on soil or your health.

In fact outside of weeding during the hot sunny times of the day without adequate protection or better choosing a cooler time of the day it is a very relaxing task.

I actually liken it to a form of meditation where you focus on the weeds and leave the preferred plants and seedlings to grow.

Weeds can be pulled out easily when the soil is wet or even better use a sharp knife slicing through the growing stem under the soil surface leaving the root system to rot away and feed the soil.

The sliced tops minus their roots can be laid on bare soil to also rot and feed the soil.

In fact using this method your weeds become a valuable asset as a green crop does.

The key to make this easiest, is to weed regularly when the weeds are still seedlings.

For larger weeds a weed eater with a Pivotrim Pro attachment does a good job and less risk of damaging tree trunks.

Waste areas, cracks in concrete and in between cobbles just pour salt onto the weeds and repeat when they reappear.

Edges around lawns can be treated with the same or old sump oil is an alternative.

Spraying weeds on a sunny day when the soil is dry with vinegar or cheap cooking oil dehydrates the weeds.

Ammonia sulphate, Urea and potassium Nitrate can be used to sprinkle over weeds when dry and then they will burn out the weed and crown. It is an old method for weeds in lawns.

Lawn sand used to be used for weed control in lawns before the chemicals were made.

If I remember rightly one part sulphate of ammonia to about 5 parts sand, broadcast over a lawn with particular attention to where the weeds are. This would burn the weeds and the grasses but the grasses would recover where the weeds would not; hopefully.

Steam and flames are two more methods that can be employed to control weeds and there are appliances available to those that like to use these methods.

The steam is a better option than the fire method being safer around buildings and dry times.

Try this recipe; Trim the weeds with a sharp pair of garden shears. This helps open the plant to receive the natural weed killer.

Mix 4 litres of white vinegar with 1 cup salt and 5 mls of Raingard. The white vinegar lowers the weed's pH, the salt dries out the plant, and the Raingard helps the solution stick to the plant.

Pour the solution into a sprayer, and spray it over the weed's stalk and leaves. Apply it liberally.

(Best done on a sunny day when soil is dry)

Reapply the solution after 24 hours until the weed is completely dead.

Do not allow spray to drift onto preferred plants as they will suffer.

Some weeds have a preferred pH level to grow successfully and if we alter the pH we weaken or kill the weed. For instance if you have gorse growing then dump a good amount of garden lime in to the root zone and the gorse will die.

A garden hoe or a Dutch Hoe can be used to cut or slice weeds in garden plots and are quick and easy tools to use.

Thus as we did before the 80's we can do in the future when glyphosate has been banned in our country and else where as is happening in other countries.

I note a lab in America has started testing water, urine and babies milk for glyphosate and are looking to establish the same protocols in other existing labs though out the world.

See <http://feedtheworld.info/glyphosate-testing-test-yourself/?ngo=Organic+Consumers+Association+%28OCA%29>

Investigating reporters in America have taken up the baton about glyphosate and found that according to evidence unearthed from the archives of the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) in the United States, it has been established that Monsanto was fully aware of the potential of glyphosate to cause cancer in mammals as long ago as 1981.

See <http://www.globalresearch.ca/monsanto-knew-of-glyphosate-cancer-link-35-years-ago/5443741>

It would be a great start if NZ Food Safety started testing our food for traces of glyphosate it would likely help to improve our health and reduce the health bill. Maybe someone should ask them?