

**Martha's Monthly**  
**June 2008**  
**Martha's Garden has been whispering "Ban Pesticides!!"**

The beginning of June is such a hopeful time in Martha's garden. The seeds are planted, the grass is green, and the trees have all burst their beauty in a most unselfconscious manner. It is as though Martha's garden is whispering to her, "come and enjoy" and Martha whispers back to it, "of course, my dear, you are so charming". Unfortunately, Martha's neighbour is not charming. He is afraid of ants and dandelions. So, while Martha sees her garden brimming with the whispers of anticipation, her neighbour sees it as teeming with creatures. Martha loves all the critters (and even the dandelions) but her neighbour has declared war on the all of them and spread a pesticide all over the place. Martha had to whisper her apologies to her garden all weekend because she dared not enter the yard with those chemicals in the air.

See Martha takes the Canadian Cancer Society seriously and when they recently called on the Alberta government to place restrictions on the sale and use of cosmetic pesticides she thought, "It's about time!" The Cancer Society noted that Alberta is the only province with no limits on pesticide sales while Quebec, and soon Ontario, have banned the sale of many cosmetic pesticides (See [Cancer Society media release](#)). In the same media release the Cancer Society noted that in a recent poll "87% of those polled say they would support community bylaws restricting the use of cosmetic pesticides, chemicals that are used for strictly aesthetic purposes, on public and private land." *Of course most of us want to see restrictions on the use of the chemicals.* We know that there are alternatives to cosmetic pesticides AND we know that the **threat to human health is clear**. Numerous cancers, according to the Cancer Society, are associated with pesticide use: "The list of cancers associated with pesticide exposure include childhood and adult leukemia, childhood brain cancer, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, neuroblastoma, brain cancer, prostate cancer, kidney cancer, pancreatic cancer and some lung cancers." (See [Cancers](#))

Sadly, the threat to human health is **worse for children**:

A Report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development (Ottawa, May 2000) entitled *Pesticides: Making the Right Choice for the Protection of health and the Environment* notes: "Children, for many reasons, make up the group that is the most vulnerable to pesticides, because of their developmental and physiological characteristics, their daily activities which are different from those of adults, and the fact that the fetus and the newborn are exposed to pollutants accumulated in the mother's body. Current research programs in Canada do not take these specificities into account and the information available to the general public is inadequate." (See [Cancers](#))

So cosmetic pesticides are linked with cancers, they are more damaging to children (who tend to be the ones rolling around on the lawn!), and other provinces have banned their sale and use. So why is Alberta behind on this one??

It is not like there is no one behind it. Here are just a few of the groups calling for a ban on pesticide sales in Alberta: The Alberta Medical Association, the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta, the College and Association of Family Physicians of Alberta, The Lung Association of Alberta, the David Suzuki Foundation, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, the Council for Canadians Prairie Chapter and the Sierra Club of Canada Prairie Chapter.

A 2005 Alberta Environment report noted that **65% of surface water samples found pesticides**. (It is worst in June when we get the most rain.) The report called the detection of pesticides in surface waters, “common and widespread.” Even though water quality guidelines were not frequently exceeded, the report’s author noted, “understanding the full implications of pesticide occurrence and co-occurrence in surface waters remains a complex and largely unresolved issue.” (See: [pesticide report](#))

(Note: For more information on opposing pesticide use in your community:

Toolkit for getting a law opposing the cosmetic use of pesticides: [Sierra club pdf](#)

David Suzuki Foundation: <http://www.davidsuzuki.org/health/food/>)

**So let’s go through this slowly:**

- **Alberta Environment finds pesticides in 65% of surface water samples.**
- **Canadian Cancer Society says pesticide use is linked to a number of cancers.**
- **The Alberta government can ban the sale of cosmetic pesticides (like ON and PQ have already done)**
- **87% of Albertans support a ban.**

Is it just Martha, or does this seem simple? Let’s join with the David Suzuki Foundation and the Canadian Cancer Society in their call for a province wide ban on cosmetic pesticides (the kind Martha’s neighbour sprays to keep his lawn uniformly green).

Please [send the following letter](#) (with your personal add-ons, please) to:

[Premier@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Premier@gov.ab.ca); [medicine.hat@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:medicine.hat@assembly.ab.ca),  
[calgary.mountainview@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:calgary.mountainview@assembly.ab.ca); [edmonton.highlandsnorwood@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:edmonton.highlandsnorwood@assembly.ab.ca);  
[marthasmthly@yahoo.ca](mailto:marthasmthly@yahoo.ca)

It’s easy, by clicking [send](#) you’ll open your email program with the addresses already inserted; then just copy and paste the following letter into the body of your email and add your thoughts. Please make sure you add your full name and address too.

June 15, 2008

Dear Premier Stelmach:

A 2005 Alberta Environment report found that 65% of surface waters in Alberta are polluted with pesticides. This horrifies me. Pesticides, according to the Canadian Cancer Society, are linked to a number of cancers, especially cancers that strike children. I am struck by how pervasive pesticides are in this province and how unnecessary they remain. The Canadian Cancer Society has called for a ban on the retail sale of cosmetic (ornamental) pesticides in the province of Alberta as well as a ban on their use in private gardens and lawns, public parks, recreational facilities and a phase-out on golf courses.

The Alberta government needs to take a leadership role in this matter. As part of the Water for Life Strategy of your government, I expect the Alberta government to ban cosmetic pesticides as a first step to protecting the health of our water and our children. Other provinces have banned the sale of these cosmetic pesticides. I expect my province to do the same.

Sincerely,

Your name and address