



Summer Gardening and Glyphosate ('Weed' killer).

To live sustainably, we need to meet our own needs now, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Using our consumer power to decline to buy or use products that harm people, or our environment is an important part of this, and can persuade businesses to change and become more sustainable.

Glyphosate based herbicides (weed killers) are available in all garden centres, used widely in agriculture, and are now the most commonly used herbicides in the world. Since 1974 the use of glyphosate has dramatically increased and made billions of dollars for the corporation (Monsanto) which first produced it (as 'Roundup'). Initially the public were led to believe it was safe, and that it only affected plants. This is not true.

Monsanto paid for, and 'ghost wrote' the initial study finding glyphosate 'safe'. Meaning they used their own unpublished data and writers and just added the names of other academics. For these reasons, this study has now been retracted as unreliable by the scientific journal which originally published it. In the US Monsanto have been found guilty of suppressing information about the potential links between glyphosate and cancer.

It is difficult to scientifically prove that glyphosate causes cancer, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's dementia or other human illnesses, because you can't intentionally feed it to humans and wait for results, which may develop many years later. Studies have found that glyphosate causes cancer in mice, leading the World Health Organisation (WHO) to declare it as probably cancer causing in humans. Very many other studies have found glyphosate to be a serious health risk to people, and our environment.

In people it has been found to increase the risk of developing non-Hodgkins Lymphoma cancer. Chronic exposure to small amounts of glyphosate in our food and environment are also believed to increase the risk of neurological conditions such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease, as well as many other types of cancer (the Global Glyphosate Study 2025). In insects, animals and humans glyphosate can disrupt hormones, and our own healthy bacteria living inside our bodies. This can permanently reduce our necessary good gut bacteria and increase inflammation.

Glyphosate is toxic to all plants, not just weeds, so using it risks damaging or killing other nearby plants or trees. Glyphosate is toxic to certain bacteria and fungi in the soil and water, to aquatic organisms, insects and animals. It can persist for days, many months or even years in waterways, seas and oceans, and has been found in rain. In the soil it can persist for days or months depending on the soil type, amount

of rain, and temperature. It reduces bee populations, reduces healthy soil bacteria and worms and reduces soil fertility.

The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) do not support the use of glyphosate and instead recommend using non-chemical methods to control weeds in our gardens, which are also safer for pets and children (<http://rhs.org.uk/prevention-protection/weedkiller-damage>). Glyphosate is frequently sprayed to combat weeds in public spaces, parks and playgrounds, and skin contact is a way for glyphosate to enter the body. So, councils and employers have a legal responsibility to ensure this does not impact on the health of employees or the public. Children should not play on sprayed areas for at least 48 hours and could be at risk from handling or ingesting the soil, flowers or grass. Glyphosate has been found in the urine of people who have used this herbicide and their pets, as well as in farm workers, farm animals.

Glyphosate residues are found in our food, for example: porridge, cereal, beer, fruit and vegetables, nuts, beans, herbs and spices, vegetable oils, sugar, honey, coffee, tea etc. Long term low dose glyphosate in our foods is believed to be a risk to our health. In the UK glyphosate is often sprayed on cereal and bean crops just before harvesting as a lower cost method of drying the crop out so it can be stored, but this increases the amount of glyphosate residue in foods produced so it has been banned in some countries. Personally I wish there were fewer commercial pressures on farmers, so they could consider using less pesticides and herbicides, and that our country supported farmers better, to encourage more use of organic and biodynamic farming methods. Until they do, organic food products with less chemical contamination will be too expensive for many people to buy.

In your garden though, you can choose not to use herbicides. If you are growing fruit, vegetables or herbs this could benefit the health of you, your family and anyone eating your produce. Ethical Organic Seeds (<https://www.ethicalorganicseeds.co.uk>) sell organic seeds online at a low price, aiming to make them available to everyone. Accepting a few dandelions, daisies, nettles or other wild plants in your lawn, borders or driveway could also help UK butterfly, insect, bird and wildlife populations to recover a bit from the sharp declines of recent years (<https://foe.org/blog/the-insect-decline-crisis/>).

Butterflies need certain native wild plants to lay their eggs on, for their caterpillars to feed on. The Big Butterfly Count is taking place from 7th July - 9th August this year, and you can download butterfly id charts and an App to join in from: <http://bigbutterflycount.butterfly-conservation.org/>