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JOHN'S CORNER:

Question From Readers:

by John Ferguson

Hi there,

I just got finished reading your latest newsletter and would like to suggest a follow-up commentary from Mr. Ferguson regarding Round-Up (glyphosate).

I'm new to organic gardening/lawn care and in my uninformed, misguided former practices, I've been guilty of using Round Up in the past.

So, with this being the case, could Mr. Ferguson perhaps write a column on how to go about remediating any damage from Round Up? Is it simply a matter of letting time go by and the ingredients bio-degrade by themselves. Is it a matter of adding compost -- and if so, does the compost need to be added after a certain time period has passed? Are some other types of additives/supplements needed?

I've attended a couple of OBHA events and have learned quite a bit in the last six months, but I still feel at a loss sometimes on how to handle situations without resorting to "chemicals". Your newsletter certainly helps in that regard. Please keep up the great work!

K.K.

K.K.

there are many factors involved in the breakdown of the chemicals in Round-Up but they will naturally degrade over time. From memory, breakdown rates vary greatly from a few months to one study that found significant residues after 15 years. Over the next few weeks I will be going back through all the research articles and will cover bio-remediation in detail if I find additional information.

The active ingredient Glyphosate is broken down mainly by bacteria as there is a bacterial population explosion in the soil after application and a decrease in beneficial fungus. This means the bacteria are feeding on the chemicals. This is also why weed problems almost always get worse after Round-up application. From soil biology we know that most of the plant species we call "weeds" like soils with lots of bacteria and very



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little fungus. Hence the application of Round-Up creates conditions that favor weed growth over desired perennial plants.

There have been reports that the degradation can be greatly accelerated by the use of products that stimulate the growth of bacteria. So as a first step spraying the affected area with agricultural molasses will provide a food source and stimulate the growth of many species of bacteria. It may take 2 or 3 applications over a couple weeks. After the initial breakdown has begun it would be beneficial to treat the area with 1/4 inch of a good compost to help re-establish the good microbes as the pathogen levels in the soil will be very high. Without a food source (plants) the pathogen levels will start to decline back to normal levels. In addition, secondary remediation of the initial breakdown products may require various fungus species in the compost.

John, enjoyed reading your article and would appreciate any reference points for your information so I can research the matter further

Thank you, D.B.

I will be providing some references in later articles. There is a list of books, magazines, journals, DVD's, e-newsletters, etc. on all sorts of subjects:

<http://www.natureswayresources.com/infosheets/sources.html>

Many of the e-newsletters by different consumer awareness groups scour the scientific literature for information. They will often give a one or two sentence summary of the article. If one is interested they can click on the link for short summary of a research article. There is almost always a link back to the full research paper as published in the journal. Note: Many journals charge a fee to download articles. One can go to the websites of these consumer groups and search for articles.

You will not find out information to protect your families and pets from publications that accept advertizing from the chemical companies as they are more concerned about the advertising revenue than helping their readers. A few magazines that are written for the average reader are Mother Earth News, "E", Acres,USA, Organic Gardening and Organic Living.

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