



**For Immediate Release**

**Contact:** Lee Van Wychen  
Science Policy Director  
National & Regional Weed  
Science Societies  
[Lee.VanWychen@wssa.net](mailto:Lee.VanWychen@wssa.net)  
202-746-4686

**APRIL 27, 2009**

## **What Homeowners Can Learn from Farmers about Weed Control**

§ *An “integrated” strategy and good stewardship techniques are essential*

(LAWRENCE, Kansas) — Home gardeners are out in full force this spring tending to lawns, gardens and flower beds. But most of us will find it’s not all smooth sailing. Inevitably we will need to battle persistent weeds that rob nutrients and moisture from our prized plantings.

University of Idaho weed scientist Don Morishita says homeowners can benefit from what professional farmers have known for years: an “integrated” weed management plan is best.

“Farmers have learned that relying on a single approach to weed control can have detrimental side effects,” Morishita said. “Excessive tilling can lead to soil erosion, while repeated use of a single herbicide can lead to resistance, making the herbicide less effective over time. You’ll get much better long-term results if you use a variety of techniques from your weed management toolbox.”

Scientists who specialize in weed control call this approach Integrated Pest Management (IPM). An IPM plan for weeds around the home considers all the available options – from hand-pulling, herbicides and hoeing to mowing, mulching and rototilling.

Here are some lessons from farmers that can benefit your own backyard:

### **§ Make Mulch.**

Mulch from grass clippings or other organic sources can offer excellent protection from weeds by hindering seed germination under trees, shrubs, flowers and vegetables. Weeds that do sprout can be pulled by hand or hoed if you catch them before they become large. Mulch has the additional benefit of protecting the soil, greatly reducing the chance of water runoff and soil erosion.

### **§ Build a Buffer.**

Farmers use conservation buffer strips alongside their fields to prevent soil erosion, slow water runoff and keep fertilizers and herbicides where they belong. Homeowners can mimic the buffer strips used on the farm by surrounding their garden or flower beds with a dense, healthy lawn or

other groundcover. If you see eroded spots, quickly establish new groundcover, apply mulch or modify the landscape to protect soil, conserve water and exclude weeds.

### **§ Look at the Label!**

Herbicides are a valuable tool in IPM. Make sure you exercise the same commitment to stewardship that farmers do. Start by selecting the right product. Then use, store and dispose of it properly. Above all, let the product label be your guide.

“The herbicides we use today carry detailed label instructions that are based on extensive scientific research,” Morishita says. “So read the label carefully. If you follow the instructions provided, you’ll be able to get the weed control results you’re after, while also protecting the environment.”

### ***About the Weed Science Society of America***

The Weed Science Society of America, a nonprofit professional society, was founded in 1956 to encourage and promote the development of knowledge concerning weeds and their impact on the environment. The Weed Science Society of America promotes research, education and extension outreach activities related to weeds, provides science-based information to the public and policy makers, and fosters awareness of weeds and their impacts on managed and natural ecosystems. For more information, visit [www.wssa.net](http://www.wssa.net).

# # #

### **Sidebar:**

#### **Ten Stewardship Tips for Using Herbicides Wisely**

Herbicides can be powerful tools for protecting your lawn, garden, and flowers from weeds. But it’s important to use them wisely. Here are 10 important stewardship tips that can protect you, your plantings and the environment.

1. Identify the specific weeds competing with your desirable plants and choose an herbicide specifically designed to control them. Then select the appropriate application equipment, calibrate it carefully, and accurately determine the treatment area.
2. Never apply herbicides when it is windy or when a heavy rainfall is imminent.
3. Carefully avoid contact with sensitive plants growing among or near target weeds. For guidance on which plants can tolerate your herbicide, consult the product label.
4. If the label indicates the herbicide is to be applied as a spray, prepare only the amount of mixture you need. Apply any excess spray solution to another label-approved site or dispose according to the label.
5. Have an absorbent material on hand (such as clay-based pet litter) to quickly soak up any spill.

6. If the herbicide is applied in granular form or is included in a granular fertilizer you're using on your lawn or planting beds, sweep up any material that lands on paved areas and return it to the bag.
7. When applying a postemergence herbicide designed for weeds that have already emerged, make certain the weeds are actively growing and are the right size to be treated.
8. When applying a preemergence herbicide designed to keep weeds from emerging, the label may instruct you to water the product into the soil. Remember that a light irrigation (0.1 to 0.25 inches) will do the trick. You will also conserve our valuable water resources by using only what you need.
9. Store herbicides in a well-labeled, tightly closed container in a secure, dry location away from children, food and animal feed.
10. Always follow the label directions for disposing of excess herbicide spray solution or empty cans or bags. Remember that the absorbent material used to soak up a spill must also be disposed of like an herbicide. The National Pesticide Information Center (1-800-858-7378, <http://npic.orst.edu>) can answer general herbicide questions and put you in touch with your state's household waste agency for instructions on where to dispose of unwanted herbicide product.

# # #