

# Perfect lawn comes with hefty price, studies say

BY LISA QUEEN  
Staff Writer

Studies are proving there's a heavy price to pay for the suburban passion of creating and maintaining the perfect lawn, according to York Region Environmental Alliance founder Karen Woudstra.

Pesticides are being linked to brain, lung, prostate and breast cancers, neurological and reproductive problems, childhood leukemia, cerebral palsy, attention deficit disorder, suppressed immune disorders, kidney damage, Lou Gehrig's disease and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

"Pesticides are poison," said Woudstra.

Since the European colonization of Canada, there has been a desire for homeowners to out do each other in achieving the perfect English lawn and garden.

The competition became more fierce after the Second World War, Woudstra said, when it was discovered nerve

gases could be used as pesticides to wipe out pesky weeds and insects.

Environmental Alliance is working to eradicate the cosmetic use of pesticides.

Woudstra argues organic methods can be used to maintain a satisfactory — albeit less than "perfect" — lawn.

"I personally do not believe my lawn has to look like a green carpet. I don't mind the occasional weed or clover. In fact, I think clover enhances a lawn," she said.

"I don't believe your lawn has to look like a golf course."

Phil Shaw, co-owner of Keswick's Biotech Weed Control, agreed pesticides are over-used in the industry.

But arguing environmental groups use individual studies as proof pesticides should be banned rather than weighing on-going research, Shaw insisted pesticides can and should be used responsibly.

Still, faced with increasing

concerns from residents and pressure from environmental groups, many municipalities are moving to restrict or ban the use of pesticides.

The City of Vaughan, for example, is promoting a pesticide-free environment, although the city hasn't banned the chemicals.

Officials and politicians from Aurora and Newmarket have also expressed an interest in joining the campaign against pesticides, although

they haven't adopted formal policies.

York Region has agreed to host a forum on pesticide use May 29 in Richmond Hill.

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