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Glyphosate Backgrounder

We offer the following background information to help you discuss the benefits of glyphosate and answer common questions. The most important message we want to share is:

Used properly, glyphosate provides reliable weed control that helps protect our homes and communities without impacting health or the environment. Glyphosate is an important herbicide helping to protect our state's green spaces from noxious, poisonous, and invasive plants.

Common Questions

The following questions address some of the most common concerns about glyphosate.

What is glyphosate?

Glyphosate is the active ingredient in the most widely used weed control (or herbicide) products on the market. Once applied and absorbed by a weed, glyphosate travels to the weed's roots where it targets and blocks the specific enzyme necessary for weed growth. As the weed withers to the ground, any remaining glyphosate is broken down in the soil into naturally occurring substances like carbon dioxide and phosphate.

Is glyphosate safe?

The U.S. EPA rigorously reviews all pesticide products before they are made available for sale and use; glyphosate is no exception. In fact, it's one of the most thoroughly evaluated herbicide products in the world. In addition to the U.S. EPA, regulatory agencies in more than 160 countries have reviewed and approved glyphosate-based products.

The EPA has determined that glyphosate, like other approved pesticide products, poses no unreasonable risk to people, wildlife or the environment when used according to labeled instructions.

Does it pose a risk to human health?

The enzyme glyphosate targets and destroys is only found in plants, not humans or animals, and its use is carefully regulated. The U.S. EPA and other agencies across the world set limits on how much herbicide can be used and the intervals at which the herbicide can be sprayed on the plants. These are based on scientific data that determine the breakdown of the herbicide on the plant material itself, as well as degradation rates in the soil.

Does glyphosate exposure increase the risk of cancer?

Glyphosate is one of the most widely used and thoroughly evaluated herbicides in the world. Many scientists have conducted studies and field research with glyphosate herbicides and published their results in peer-reviewed scientific journals. The overwhelming consensus is that glyphosate, when used properly, poses no risk of adverse effects to people, wildlife or the environment.



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If that's the case, why did the International Agency for Research on Cancer classify glyphosate as a carcinogen in 2015?

The IARC classification did not consider years of science-based analysis by regulatory agencies around the world. The IARC review looked selectively at data to arrive at its classification. No regulatory agency, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the European Food Safety Authority and the World Health Organization, considers glyphosate to be a carcinogen.¹

What is the benefit of using glyphosate?

Maintaining green spaces, homes, lawns and playing fields protects a homeowner, school, city or athletic complex's investment in them. Reliable weed control keeps outdoor spaces useable, playable and enjoyable. Glyphosate and other herbicides also help control invasive weeds, which can compete with native plants and negatively impact the local ecosystem.

The green industry

There are more than 900,000 lawn care, landscape and grounds keeping professionals² working for more than 475,000 small businesses³ that rely on products containing glyphosate to keep parks useable, fields safe for play and residential and business landscapes properly maintained. Removing glyphosate from the weed control toolbox takes away a reliable, cost-effective option, especially for land management in share spaces across the state. During the current state budget crisis, this could have a significant impact on municipalities and local services charged to take care of public outdoor spaces.

The value of pesticide and fertilizers for small businesses, municipalities and homeowners

Approximately 475,000 small businesses use EPA-reviewed pesticide products as part of their toolbox to solve insect, weed, rodent and other pest problems for businesses and consumers. More than 900,000 trained and licensed professional applicators across the country diligently complete educational and training coursework to receive and renew their application licenses.

These small business owners and applicators and their families live and work in our communities. They also want to protect the environment, their friends, families and neighbors, and the outdoor spaces where they work, live and play. EPA-reviewed products provide pest control options that help deliver proven, effective solutions when used according to label instructions.

Removing pesticide options from the pest control toolbox can have significant economic impacts, particularly on communities and municipalities working to keep parks, playgrounds and athletic fields in usable shape. Without options to solve problems in the most targeted manner possible, maintenance costs can significantly increase.

¹ <https://monsanto.com/company/media/statements/glyphosate-report-response/>

² <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes373011.htm>

³ <https://www.lawnstarter.com/lawn-care/lawn-care-industry-statistics>