



April 13, 2005

Mr. Robert Nardelli
CEO
Home Depot, Inc.
2455 Paces Ferry Road
Atlanta, GA 30339

Dear Mr. Nardelli,

As the majority of the country enters the lawn and garden season, the *National Coalition for Pesticide-Free Lawns* is compelled to write you. We are asking Home Depot headquarters to begin a dialogue with us about offering your customers a wider selection of natural, non-toxic lawn products and training your employees on how to advise customers on natural lawn care. Additionally, we ask that your company, as a leader in the home and garden market, reconsider the sale of *weed and feed* products that pose hazards both to people and the environment. Below we highlight some statistics regarding the demand for organic lawn care products and the dangers associated with chemical lawn pesticides.

We believe that the switch from toxic to non-toxic lawn products and services is inevitable, and we know that in time Home Depot branches all across the country would be selling more of these products anyway. But we also suspect that your company did not become the leader it is by sitting back and waiting for opportunities to present themselves. We are organizations that collectively are in touch with thousands of people everyday who are demanding these products – and we think it is time to share this information with you.

As you are undoubtedly aware, organic food production and sales, which many said would never capture much of the market, is today an \$11 billion industry and the demand continues to grow daily. We believe the growth in demand for non-synthetic, chemical-free organic foods will soon be matched by a growth in the sale of organic/natural lawn care products and services. Recent surveys show more than half of all households, some 40 million, are buying or seeking to buy non-toxic, natural alternatives to lawn pesticides. Additional surveys tell us that with a little information about the harm that pesticides can do to children, families, pets, wildlife, drinking water and soil, demand for these alternative products will rise substantially. Yet, major retailers are barely touching this emerging market.

It is no secret that lawn pesticides are poisons. The label however fails to include critical decision-making information, such as whether or not scientific studies link the product to cancer. Of 30 commonly used lawn pesticides 14 are 'probable' or 'possible' carcinogens, the same amount are linked to birth defects, 18 are linked to reproductive problems, 20 to liver or kidney damage, and 18 to neurotoxicity. The impact of these chemicals on beneficial organisms such as

bees, earthworms, birds and fish is equally alarming. If given a choice between a potential cancer-causing, fish-killing poison to get rid of weeds and a natural biological or bacterial based product, many more consumers would choose to go natural.

Children are particularly vulnerable to lawn pesticides not only because they take in more chemicals relative to their body weight and have immature organ systems, but also because they play on lawns for extended periods of time and put their hands in their mouth. Studies also show dogs are vulnerable to being poisoned by lawn chemicals. Waterways are clogged with algae bloom from phosphorus-intensive synthetic fertilizers and drinking water sources are polluted by the subsequent use and runoff of pesticides. Lawn pesticides are also harmful to wildlife directly through bird or fish kills for example, and indirectly through impacts on habitat such as diminished food supply and shelter and chronic reproductive or other effects.

Consumers are becoming more aware of the dangers of lawn pesticides and are opting for green, healthy lawns that do not pose hazards to their families, pets, neighbors, or communities. Similarly, more and more landscapers are also seeing the multiple benefits of providing natural, organic lawn care services - for their own health, that of their employees and customers, and for their profit margins.

Weed and Feed is a special case. We ask you to reconsider putting this product on your shelves for two simple reasons. One is that it contributes to environmental pollution probably more than any other product due to the way it's used, and two because it poses unacceptable hazards to dogs and children. Please see the enclosed "Five Reasons Not To Use *Weed and Feed*" factsheet.

We have included some simple factsheets to provide you with more information on the hazards of the active ingredients in lawn pesticides and the problems with *weed and feed* and hope you will review these materials in order to further your understanding of the basis of our request.

We recognize that regional Home Depot outlets offer different products and that some regional branches are already heading in the direction of selling (a few) natural lawn products. We would like to see this transition encouraged, elevated and pervasive throughout the company. To do this, our coalition offers its wide range of expertise to advise Home Depot on implementing a national move toward supplying the market with organic lawn care information and merchandise.

Thank you for your consideration of our request and offer. We look forward to discussing this with you and will be in touch shortly to schedule a meeting.

Sincerely,

Shawnee Hoover
Beyond Pesticides
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Defenders of Wildlife
1130 17th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20036
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On behalf of the members of the *National Coalition for Pesticide-Free Lawns*

National Coalition for Pesticide-Free Lawns Steering Committee



Agricultural Resources Center
North Carolina

Beyond Pesticides
Washington, D.C. (national)

Defenders of Wildlife
Washington, D.C. (national)

Environment & Human Health, Inc.
Connecticut

Facts about Alternatives to Chemical
Trespassing, Inc.
Florida

Grassroots Environmental Education
New York

Greater Madison Healthy Lawn Team
Wisconsin

Pesticide Free Zone Campaign
California

Michigan Environmental Council
Michigan

New Jersey Environmental Federation
New Jersey

Northeast Organic Farming Association
Connecticut, New Jersey, Massachusetts

Northwest Coalition for
Alternatives to Pesticides
Oregon

Project Ladybug
Maryland

The Watershed Partnership
Connecticut

Safer Pest Control Project
Illinois

Salem Citizens for Alternatives to
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Toxics Action Center
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Washington Toxics Coalition
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