

New resource for schools introduces pesticide issues

PAN UK is launching an educational video for secondary schools, 'The Pesticide Trail'. Produced in conjunction with Team Video, it presents an overview of the history, use and problems associated with pesticides.

'The Pesticide Trail' presents individual issues through interviews with key players involved in pesticide use, and those adversely affected by pesticides. Evidence comes from water companies required to remove residues from drinking water, and individuals suffering ill health due to pesticide exposure. Student viewers are encouraged to understand and assess the benefits and risks of dependence on these chemicals.

The school curriculum has changed significantly in the past few decades. Alongside the traditional core subjects of maths, English, sciences and languages, are subjects such as citizenship, and personal, social and health education. These subjects have ambitious goals in aspiring to teach students to be informed citizens, developing the skills of enquiry and the ability to participate in social and political processes.

The video consists of eight individual teaching units, each focusing on a particular area of concern about pesticide use. The unit takes the form of investigations in which students are filmed interviewing key people (farmers, regulators, pesticide exposure sufferers, anti-pesticide campaigners, supermarkets, pesticide manufacturers) and uncovering problems.

- **Pesticides and Food** This unit explores the use of pesticides in the production of food.
- **Pesticides and Health** Interviews with three people who experienced ill health after exposure to pesticides are juxtaposed with an interview with the Chair of the Committee advising the government on pesticides permitted for use in the UK.
- **Pesticides and Water** Pesticide residues in the water supply require the water companies to use costly processes and technology to remove them. The unit includes interviews with conventional farmers and with representatives of Severn Trent water company.
- **Cotton** Cotton fibre, the starting material for jeans and T-shirts, uses acutely toxic pesticides. This unit has footage from cotton fields in Benin; interviews with an organic cotton campaigner, fashion designer Katharine Hamnett; and a small business

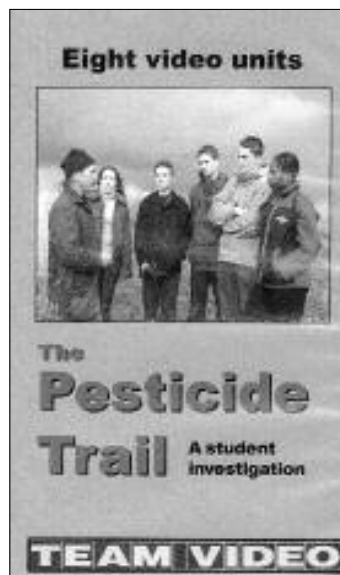
selling organic cotton clothes.

- **Chocolate** Although the pesticide lindane has been banned in the UK residues are still found in conventional chocolate bars. The unit includes an interview with a representative of the Chocolate Industry Association and explores the use of pesticides in cocoa production.

- **Toxic Origins** An interview with environmental toxicologist Dr. Alastair Hay on the history of pesticide use is interspersed with historic footage of pesticide spraying.

- **Pesticides and the Environment** Recent research has shown that levels of atrazine 30 times lower than that allowed in drinking water in the US can 'feminise' male frogs. The unit contains an interview with the scientist who carried out this important research.

- **Pesticides in the Community** This unit explores the use of pesticides in communities and looks at possible routes of exposure.



The citizenship curriculum is relatively new to UK schools. This video should be a welcome resource for teachers addressing the demands of this new curriculum for the first time. (RM)

The Pesticide Trail: A student investigation, 8 video units (90 minutes) with workbook (55pp), Team Video, Canalot Studios, 222 Kensal Road, London, W10 5BN, UK, admin@team-video.co.uk, 2003, £49.15 (includes postage and VAT).

Know your weeds

John Walker's book provides a wide range of information about weeds and their control. Along with an identification guide (including sixty colour photos of common weeds) colour-coded to allow instant recognition of the most pernicious weeds, the book describes the life cycles of weeds and their vegetative modes of propagation. A section on non-chemical weed control and prevention is followed by a series of useful tips on how to compost even the most pernicious.

However, the book is also 'a celebration of weeds'. Pointing out that weeds are just plants growing in the wrong place John Walker seeks to foster an appreciation of these common plants. He helps us 'translate' what weeds can tell us about our gardens, its fertility and the pH of its soil. He also exhorts us to see the merits of many of our weeds, pointing out which ones are edible, which provide good over-winter cover for insects, and emphasising the abundance of insect life adapted to live with our common weeds.

A manageable length and remarkably jargon-free, this book will be an extremely useful resource book for any gardener.

John Walker, Weeds: an earth-friendly guide to the identification, use and control, Cassell Illustrated, 2-4 Heron Quays, London E14 4JP, 2003 £12.99, 144pp.

Friendly ants

This manual is an interesting yet simple and practical tool with beautiful illustrations. It is not only a great source of information about weaver ants but also an excellent brief introduction to natural enemies. The well presented illustrations make for easy identification. As the authors indicate, the book will definitely appeal to farmers, university students, NGO workers, extension staff and all those engaged in communicating agricultural information. An excellent combination of scientific knowledge and farmers' expertise, this book will be a valuable resource for IPM especially in Africa and Asia. It is of special interest to fruit tree growers, who are able to use weaver ants as cost effective and sustainable alternative means of pest control thereby contributing to more healthy orchards.

Paul van Mele and Nguyen Thi Thu Cuc, Ants as friends: Improving your tree crops with weaver ants, CABI Bioscience, 2003, 67pp.

PAN Europe conferences, winter 2003

PAN Europe is organising a policy conference on *Reducing Pesticide Dependency in Europe to Protect Human Health, Environment and Biodiversity*, to be held 20 November 2003 in Copenhagen. Prominent government officials, physicians, researchers and practitioners from different European countries will speak, with the aim of building support for concrete EU and national level policy commitment to reducing pesticide dependency. The target audience is from EU and Accession countries: pesticide regulators and decision-makers in the fields of health; sustainable agriculture and environment; NGOs organised at European level; crop protection professionals and the private sector.

PAN Europe's annual conference will take place on 21-22 November, also in Copenhagen, with a focus on capacity-building for PURE. Participants are invited from PAN Europe's network members and other civil society organisations.

For further details, please consult our website on www.pan-europe.net or contact: Stephanie Williamson, PAN Europe Coordinator, email: stephanie-paneuropa@pan-uk.org