

Community view

'Pesticides harm wildlife'

RAY COBBETT, from Hampshire Friends of the Earth, on the campaign against pesticides

A RECENT landmark judgement in California involving a school groundsman successfully suing a major chemical company for causing his terminal cancer has reignited the global debate about pesticides.

The California case concerned one of the best-known pesticides on the market called Roundup, produced by Monsanto which has global sales of over \$1.4bn (£1.06bn) and is familiar to most gardeners and local authorities.

The jury found in favour of the plaintiff and awarded exemplary damages of \$280m (£212m).

Up to 8,000 further actions are pending and Monsanto's (now Bayer) share price has been hit.

Following the case, dozens of local UK councils are reviewing their own use of glyphosate based products like Roundup and some multiples are considering its removal from their shelves.

Last year the EU parliament narrowly voted to re-licence glyphosate for only five years instead of 15 years requested.

This was after a 1.3 million Europe-wide petition was received to ban glyphosate and a report from the World Health Organisation in 2015 claimed that it was 'probably carcinogenic'.

Pesticide users would testify that it does what it says on the container – namely, it kills weeds and pests.

The problem is that it also kills, directly and indirectly, other living things as well including wild flowers, invertebrates,

amphibians, fish and the animals such as birds and mammals that feed on them, including humans.

Pesticides run off into aquifers and so contaminate water supplies, costing water companies tens of millions of pounds to remove it.

Now new regimes adopted by some councils are helping the recovery of pollinating insects to offset the loss of 95 per cent of the UK's wildflower meadows and almost half of its farmland birds.

Public concern is rising as a poll by the campaign group, Pesticide Action Network (PAN), shows almost 70 per cent of the public want their schools, parks and playgrounds and other open spaces to remain pesticide-free.

The benefits are obvious: improved health for council employees, reduced exposure to the public, improved habitats for wildlife and less spent on chemicals by councils.

And there are alternatives such as hi foam systems, mulching and mechanical extraction and high pressure water jets, diluted acetic acid (vinegar) and other solutions.

Fifty Pesticide-Free Town campaigns are running in the UK while some countries and cities abroad have stopped using pesticides years ago.

Some councils, including Hampshire County Council, are reviewing their use of Roundup while others have banned it.

The message is clear – if you want to help nature recover, don't use pesticides.



WEEDS Pesticides are used to kill plantlife but they also kill wild flowers and other living things



LEGAL ACTION The makers of Roundup have been fined £1.06bn, in the US, for causing cancer

Bestselling

Crusading

Folding



The i weekend. See every angle.
Try it this Saturday. Only £1.