



# Going Pesticide-Free

A short guide to ending pesticides  
in your town or city



PESTICIDE  
ACTION  
NETWORK UK



## Introduction

Every year, thousands of litres of pesticides are used in the streets, parks, playgrounds and other open spaces of our towns and cities. At last count, there were 38 different types of pesticides used, a potentially hazardous cocktail applied directly to the areas where the majority of us spend time.

Despite the potential health and environmental risks linked to their use, pesticides are still applied in most UK towns and cities. The vast majority are herbicides (or ‘weedkillers’) designed to do nothing more than keep places looking neat and tidy. This cosmetic pesticide use is completely unnecessary and there are plenty of non-chemical alternatives available. Many towns and cities across the world have already gone pesticide-free and there is no reason why your area can’t join them.



## Human health & environmental impacts

Pesticides are designed to kill living things such as insects and weeds, but they also have the potential to harm non-target species, including humans. Children are particularly vulnerable to the negative health impacts associated with pesticides. They are more likely to play in areas that have been treated, such as parks and schools, and their bodies are less able to cope with toxins. Other vulnerable groups such as pregnant and old people are also more at risk. Pesticides can also have negative effects on the natural environment. Due to habitat loss and the large quantities of pesticides used in UK agriculture, wildlife such as bees, birds and hedgehogs are increasingly seeking refuge in our towns and cities. However, the overuse of pesticides is destroying many of the areas where they forage for food and contaminating the natural resources they depend upon.

## Focus on glyphosate

The pesticide most widely used by local authorities in the UK is the weedkiller glyphosate. This chemical has been linked to serious human health problems, including cancers and birth defects.

In March 2015, the World Health Organization concluded that glyphosate is “probably carcinogenic”. Despite this, it remains approved for use in the UK. The UK government and many local councils ignore that the approval of glyphosate in 2017, came with the condition that Member States “Minimise the use in public spaces, such as parks, public playgrounds and gardens.

In addition to concerns over its health impacts, glyphosate has also been shown to have negative effects on wildlife, including insects, earthworms, fish and amphibians and can harm pets.

## Is going pesticide free possible?

Yes! Many urban areas in Europe have been managed without pesticides for years now (including every town and city in France and Belgium). In the UK, the list includes Lewes (Sussex); Brighton & Hove, Hammersmith & Fulham and Lambeth (London), Trafford (Greater Manchester), Devon County Council and many others. These councils have all adopted non-chemical alternatives, ranging from high-tech solutions such as hot foam machines to traditional methods including hand weeding and mulching.

## What can you do?

Get campaigning! Your local council is responsible for the spraying of pesticides on land under its control which will probably include most public spaces in your area. You can encourage them to go pesticide-free in lots of different ways, but here are some top tips:

- Write to your local councillors, you can find their contact details here: [www.writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com)
- Set up a petition: either on your council website, on paper or on a platform like [www.change.org](http://www.change.org)
- Raise awareness in your local community by handing out these leaflets! Download them here: [www.pan-uk.org/pesticide-free](http://www.pan-uk.org/pesticide-free)
- Get connected with other Pesticide-Free Towns campaigners across the UK so you can keep up to date and share tips and advice. Just go to Facebook and search for the 'Pesticide Free Towns' group and request to join. [www.facebook.com/groups/pesticide.free](https://www.facebook.com/groups/pesticide.free)
- Get informed: We have lots of information on our website about the use of pesticides in towns and cities and how to set up a campaign. To access all these free materials visit [www.pan-uk.org/pesticide-free](http://www.pan-uk.org/pesticide-free).



## Who are Pesticide Action Network UK?

We are the only UK charity focused on tackling the problems caused by pesticides and promoting safe and sustainable alternatives in agriculture, urban areas, homes and gardens.

We work tirelessly to apply pressure to governments, regulators, policy makers, industry and retailers to reduce the impacts of harmful pesticides to both human health and the environment.

Find out more about our work at: [www.pan-uk.org](http://www.pan-uk.org)

## Contact PAN UK

The Brighthelm Centre  
North Road  
Brighton BN1 1YD

Telephone: 01273 964230

[pesticide-free@pan-uk.org](mailto:pesticide-free@pan-uk.org)



**It doesn't have to be this way...**

