Toxins in the Garden
Your backyard should sustain life!

Pesticides aim to kill.

Science shows that pesticide use puts family and community health at risk. However, rules around pesticides used in home gardening remain weak. Because of lobbying from the chemical industry and agribusiness, federal regulation can’t protect our health. Instead, we need strong community organizing for local action and responsible consumer practice.

Suburban gardens receive more pesticides per acre than commercial agriculture.²

All life in the garden is affected by chemicals, not just the pests they target. Pesticides contaminate food sources and can affect animal behavior and interfere with survival.³ Among 30 popular pesticides licensed for garden use: 16 are toxic to birds, 24 are toxic to fish and aquatic life and 11 are deadly to bees.⁴ Soil health suffers: nitrogen-fixing bacteria can’t work as effectively. Over time, fertility degrades.⁵
Among 30 popular garden pesticides...  
13 are likely to cause cancer  
13 are linked with birth defects  
21 with reproductive effects  
26 with liver or kidney damage  
11 affect hormone systems¹

Organic Garden Solutions ⁶

1. Arm yourself with knowledge: Link in with local nurseries, nature centers and university extension offices to see what plants grow best in your area and provide natural pest protection. Join a local gardening group.
2. Target specific pests. Deal with each population individually.
3. Hand pull weeds when ground is moist. Make sure to do a good job so nothing grows back!
4. Build healthy soil: Test the pH balance, or the acidity or alkalinity of your soil. Mulch with coffee grounds and a healthy inch of organic compost.
5. Pests will avoid certain plants - use that to your advantage! Pests have an aversion to strong scents: pairing basil and oregano around tomato plants is a good example of strategic planting. Insects don’t like garlic, onion, chives or chrysanthemums.
6. Embrace biodiversity! Interplant crops to confuse insects through a cocktail of scents.
7. Fence your garden beds to prevent four-legged creatures from snacking.
8. Try boiling water, vinegar, soap and salt: all are effective organic weed-killers.
9. Introduce biological predators of common pests; such as ladybugs, ground beetles, and praying mantis.
10. Plant to attract beneficials: bees and butterflies!
Garden Safe in Your Community

➢ Call up your town clerk to find out how you can pass a local ordinance or resolution to prohibit dangerous pesticide use in homes and gardens.
➢ Talk to your neighbors! Forming a community group to fight pesticide pollution is one of the most effective ways to make a difference. Toxics Action Center can help you pull together a group, plan a winning campaign, win a community vote, and more.
➢ Get connected to other localities that have joined the fight against backyard chemicals.
➢ Meet with decision-makers such as city council-members and Board of Health officials to help champion the effort to reduce home and garden pesticide use.

At Toxics Action Center, We believe everyone has the right to clean air, clean water and healthy communities. We work side-by-side with communities to prevent or clean up pollution in New England.
Case Study: Vermont Grows Organic Garden Access

Through over 300 garden projects in the past 12 years, Vermont Community Garden Network supports families and neighbors in collaborative planning and design of community gardens.

At the Bright Street Co-op in Burlington, an affordable housing site, pest problems are managed with physical and cultural practices.

To deter squirrels and deer, garden beds are fenced in. Colorado Potato Beetles are hand-plucked from vegetables and drowned in jars of soapy water.

The vegetables that are produced by the Bright Street Co-op are not only safe for consumption and for the greater environment, but part of a statewide movement towards food justice and self-sufficiency through gardening.

Building a group to educate your community and push for local change is the best way to fight garden pesticides!

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Photo 1: https://www.flickr.com/photos/d-olwen-dee/8201692165/in/album-72157632057433482/