

The Great Healthy Yard Pledge

Private Landowners Can Impact Change Most

Most of the land in the United States is privately owned. Currently, homeowners use ten times more chemicals per acre than farmers according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) found that almost every stream, lake, and river sampled, and half of the groundwater wells, across the country tested positive for pesticides.

No Pesticides, Weed Killers or Fertilizers

- Many of these pesticides and synthetic fertilizers are *hormone disruptors* and are linked through research and epidemiologic studies to an increased incidence of autism and ADHD, diabetes and obesity, breast cancer, prostate cancer, Non Hodgkin's Lymphoma and infertility.
- Synthetic fertilizers in water also may lead to harmful algal blooms. These algal blooms deplete the water of oxygen, killing fish, oysters and crabs and are responsible for the poor health of our beloved Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Exposure to the toxin in blue-green algae has been associated with an increased risk of neurodegenerative disorders.

Impact on Drinking Water

- Our drinking water is the biggest source of exposure to chemicals that can harm us. Pesticides can't be filtered out. The only way to prevent them from getting into our water supply is to not use them. Bottled water is not a solution because it comes from the same streams, lakes, and wells that our drinking water comes from. It is also not tested as thoroughly as tap water.
- Pharmaceuticals flushed down the drain or disposed of in landfills also wind up in our drinking water. Tests by the USGS also found that 81 percent of groundwater tested positive for drugs.

(Source: Adapted from [Why Take the Healthy Yard Pledge](#) from GCA website.)

Please watch the GCA video (you will need to sign into GCA website after clicking this link)

Video link here: <https://www.gcamerica.org/members/videos/details/id/189>.

For more information and history, read [The Great Healthy Yard Project](#) by Diane Lewis, M.D.

For more information about how to transition your yard to be pesticide-free yourself, consult [this primer](#) from fellow club member, Fraser Davis, which gives good tips and a timeline.

If you use a lawn service to feed and weed your lawn with chemicals and are interested in switching to an organic service, find companies [here](#) that have earned designation by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation as Green & Clean, committed to responsible lawn care practices.

