

Ask the Lawn expert

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What is Integrated Pest Management or IPM?

Integrated Pest Management or IPM is a decision-making process that uses all necessary techniques to suppress pests effectively, economically and in an environmentally sound manner in order to sustain healthy landscapes.

The Elements of IPM Include:

- Identifying potential pest organisms
- Monitoring pest and beneficial organism populations, pest damage, and environmental conditions
- Managing ecosystems to prevent organisms from becoming pests
- Managing pest populations using strategies that combine biological, cultural, mechanical, behavioural, and when necessary, natural or synthetic controls.

IPM Practitioners Always:

- Focus their business on the promotion and implementation of cultural practices such as using optimum soil depth and quality, suitable turf varieties, over-seeding, proper mowing heights, watering, fertilizing, aeration, and de-thatching as components for maintaining healthy lawns and preventing pest problems.

- Educate, encourage, and solicit the assistance of the property owner in ensuring that optimum cultural practices are followed.

- Prepare all sites for proper application to ensure safety.

- Document any pesticides used and inform customers.

- Not apply any pesticides unnecessarily.

- Apply properly timed treatments to maximize effectiveness.

- Monitor and document pest populations to anticipate when a treatment will be needed.

- Not sell programs that are based on numerous pesticide applications.

- Utilize spot treatment methods for the control of weeds and insects. Blanket applications are only used if warranted.

- Support mandatory IPM certification for all employees.

- Maintain a log of observations on customer's lawns in support of a provincial pest monitoring database.

- Offer a pesticide-free alternative to customers who choose not to use pesticides.

- Apply pesticides only to target areas.

- Implement buffer zones when necessary when treating adjacent to sensitive sites.

Today, integrated pest management is commonly used across Canada for the protection of green spaces.

Useful Definitions:

COMPACTION

A condition that occurs primarily in the upper 1 to 1½ inches of soil. Compacted soils have reduced air spaces and more resistance to root growth than non-compacted soils. Compacted soils are dense and cause water to puddle and run off.

CORE AERATION

The mechanical removal of small cores of soil and thatch from the lawn.

DETHATCHING

The process of removing the thatch layer from turf. This process is usually done mechanically with a dethatching unit or power rake.

THATCH

The layer of dead and decaying plant tissue located between the soil surface and the green vegetation. A thin layer of thatch is beneficial because it reduces soil compaction and it increases wear tolerance. However, a thatch layer of ½ inch or more prevents air; light and water from reaching the turf's root zone. Thatch also makes an excellent breeding ground for harmful insects and disease organisms

Who Regulates the Use of Pest Control Products?

The federal Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) of Health Canada approves all pest control products marketed in Canada. Regarded as having one of the most stringent regulatory systems in the world, the PMRA's focus is on health, the environment and food safety. The agency's toxicologists and eco-toxicologists thoroughly evaluate the viability and safety of each pesticide product for humans, wildlife and the environment.

The extensive research and development under-taken by manufacturers demonstrates their commitment to preserving a healthy environment. Their goal is to develop products which will safely and effectively assist the efforts of lawn care.

For applicator and environmental safety, the label on every product gives clear instructions on the rate of spray application, time of application and environmental factors to be considered such as wind and rain. The label provides information on handling and storage requirements, as well as occupational safety requirements such as safety equipment, classification of toxicity, flammability and corrosiveness. In addition, the label identifies the plant and grass species for which the product is registered and the pests to be controlled.

Is There Any Risk to Humans, Wildlife or the Environment?

Used according to instructions on the product label, pest control products can be applied safely to lawns and gardens. Common sense precautions, as described on the label, will ensure that there is no risk to humans, wildlife or the environment.

Applied effectively, pest control products will be efficiently absorbed by turfgrass and are almost impossible to dislodge by feet and water exposure. Even traces of chemical components which might manage to become dislodged from the

treated area are extremely minute and pose no serious hazard. Children and pets should be kept clear of the sprayed lawn until the area is dry.

In some cases, lawn care products may cause discomfort. Individuals can be exposed to many things during a day that may cause a reaction, such as food, smoke and perfume. Anyone who is concerned about a reaction, should normally avoid the treatment area during spraying activity. Lawn care specialists will be happy to provide any information required about the product being used.

Are Lawn Care Personnel Properly Trained to Use Pest Control Products Safely?

Many lawn care specialists possess degrees in agronomy and horticulture. They are also trained and licenced by the government, with concern for the safe and proper use of chemical tools.

To effectively adapt to today's changing lawn care technology and maintain a high level of expertise in the field, many technicians are involved in continuing education programs. These programs provide comprehensive training on new methods of application, product technology and safe handling procedures.

Because lawn care specialists have ongoing exposure to pest control products, they are required by government regulation to wear protective equipment while working in treatment areas.

Why Are Pest Control Products Used on Lawns?

To combat the ever present threat posed by pests and weeds, lawn care specialists utilize safe and effective pest control technology to preserve the health and aesthetic benefits of green areas.

Pest control products are designed to target specific pests - herbicides for weeds, insecticides for insects, fungicides for fungi and rodenticides for rodents. All product labels clearly identify any restriction on the use of a product due to environmental sensitivity.

Lawn care specialists evaluate pest problems to determine the most appropriate product and timing of application. Proper application techniques ensure that lawns and gardens are protected from unwanted pests.