

Planetary Wellbeing

Cut Pollution & Toxicity

- Cleaning & Laundry
- Green Carwash
- Low-Toxin Manufacturing
- Natural Garden & Lawn Care
- Organic & Sustainable Agriculture
- Pest Control
- Plant-Based Eating
- Zero Emissions
- Zero Toxin Parenting

Ensure Animal Wellness

Guard Water Resources

Ocean Awareness

Protect Biodiversity

Reduce Resource Consumption

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Avoid Common Pesticides & Preserve Biodiversity

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Biodiversity, otherwise known as biological diversity, pertains to the variety of plant, animal, and microorganism species, and the many ecosystems on Earth. There is a need for us to help maintain and redevelop **biodiversity** in order to safeguard a vibrant, thriving genetic pool on our planet. Scientists tell us that biodiversity is an extremely important issue and may be even more important than climate change for ecological survival.

One human habit that constantly threatens biodiversity is the use of common pesticides in farming and household gardening. While pesticides are often used because they are effective and quite affordable, they are a constant threat to the environment and to its different ecosystems. These pesticides were made to destroy pests but they also have toxic properties that affect humans, animals, and plants.

Toxicity is a big issue for us at Hearts, and we do everything we can to support organic agriculture and nontoxic production methods. You can help protect biodiversity, too, by adopting sustainable gardening habits that start with the **elimination of pesticide** use in your backyard.

Quick Guide: Common Pest Control Methods and Chemicals

- **Quantity of pesticides used in US yards:** More than 3 million pounds of pesticide are used in US yards every day. The US accounts for 22% of pesticide usage worldwide and this figure increases every year.^[i]

- **Most toxic residential pesticides used by Americans:** In a study done by the University of Florida, it was determined that the most toxic group of pesticides used on American lawns are organophosphates.^[ii] Some of the brands that contain this chemical include Ortho, Spectracide, and Real Kill.^[iii] Another toxic pesticide is Pyrethrin^[iv] which can be sold under the names Pounce, Aztec, and Warrior.^[v]

- **Human exposure to pesticides:** There are a number of ways by which humans can be exposed to pesticides. It can be through oral exposure, dermal exposure, or inhalation.^[vi] Children are more susceptible to pesticide exposure because their immune systems are just starting to develop, their internal organs are not yet matured, and their natural behavior puts them at greater risk.^[vii] The American Association of Poison Control Centers estimated that 79,000 children were exposed to or poisoned by residential pesticides in 1995.^[viii]

- **Health effects of pesticides to humans:** Pesticides can cause adverse effects in the human body. Mild symptoms include nausea and dizziness. Long-term exposure can lead to birth defects, neurological defects, and even death.^[ix]

- **Health effects of pesticides to wildlife:** Insecticides are the most toxic form of pesticides to wildlife. Some pesticides have no effect on wildlife but in most cases these can cause lethal effects and destruction of habitat. The toxins from pesticides can prevent animals from being able to reproduce, resulting in a decrease in population size.^[x]

- **Species decline linked to pesticide:** Pesticides have potentially caused the endangerment of 23 amphibian species^[xi] and the decline of pollinator species.^[xii] Pesticides are also present in 100% of surface water samples in big rivers and in 96% of fish populations. Pesticides are responsible for decreasing aquatic wildlife populations of some fish species by almost 70%.^[xiii]

- **Pesticides and the Great Barrier Reef:** Pesticides play a major role in the destruction of the Great Barrier Reef. At least 60,000 pounds of pesticide are leaking into this natural wonder every year.^[xiv]

- **Health effects of pesticides to pets:** Pesticides affect not just the pests that we try to get rid of; they also cause harmful effects to our beloved household pets. Cats, for instance, are known to experience respiratory arrest, seizures, and muscle weakness after exposure to organophosphates and other types of insecticides.^[xv] The same is true for dogs and other household pets.

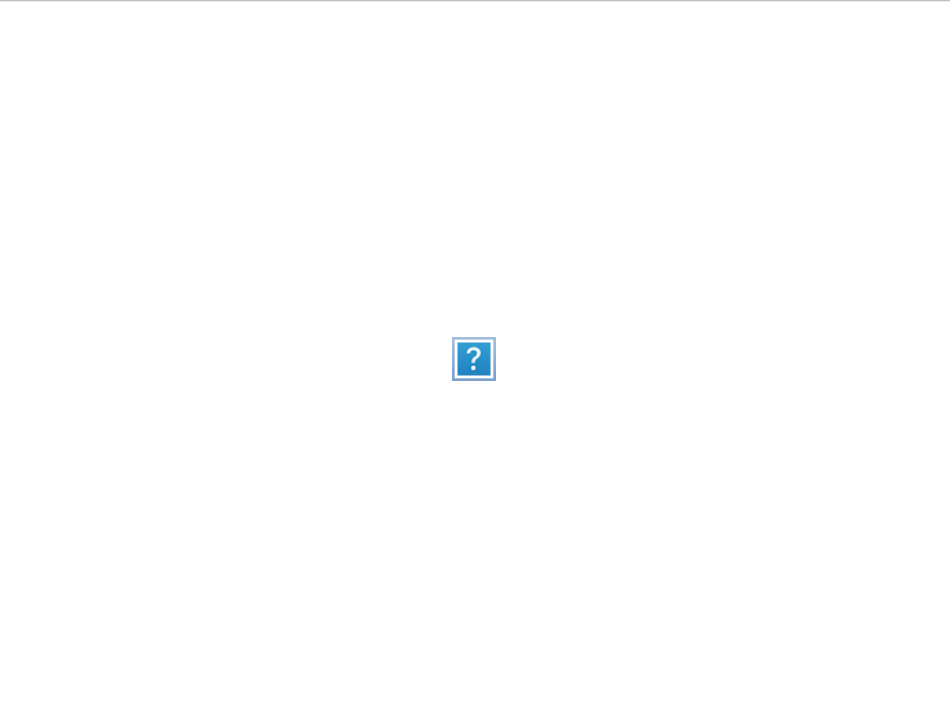
Take Action! Avoid Loss of Biodiversity

1. **Convert to using biopesticides or organic pest control:** When doing your own gardening, use only biopesticides which come from plants, microorganisms, and other natural-occurring substances. Organic pesticides and biopesticides are best at targeting only the pest and not affecting other wildlife and they are highly encouraged by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).^[xvi]
2. **Choose non-toxic pesticides:** There are plenty of substances you can use to control pests outdoors that will not harm the wildlife in your community. [Beyond Pesticides](#) has a [Non-toxic pest control tools listing](#) which should get you started. Eartheasy.com also has a [Natural Pest Control](#) guide.

3. **Practice integrated pest management:** Sometimes referred to as IPM, integrated pest management is a system that works with natural predators, healthy soil, and other non-toxic techniques to boost an ecosystems natural defenses against pests so that you can reduce the need for chemicals in the garden or on the lawn. The EPA has a comprehensive fact sheet on [Integrated Pest Management](#) which will give you tons of useful information on how to landscape without pesticides.

4. **Support volunteer groups:** You can donate to or volunteer your time with groups such as [Endangered Species International](#) or [Pacific Biodiversity Institute](#). These organizations need help with funding or with field work such as ecological assessments, fundraising, writing brochures, and field surveys.

5. **Be involved with the EPA's registration review of pesticides:** The EPA has a [EPA's registration review](#) process which allows public participation while they are reviewing registration for new pesticides. The public can comment, through dockets on the EPA website, about the usage and risk management of pesticides that are for registration or for review. ^[xvii]



Dig Deeper: Resources on Biodiversity

- Join symposiums and conferences on biodiversity. Find out how big the issue on biodiversity is and how this interacts with politics, science, and communities. The World Wildlife Fund has a long list of [Educational Resources on Biodiversity](#) that should get you started.
- Be informed on the issue of biodiversity. Did you know that you food supply depends on a biologically diverse planet? Make sure that you know how your food is grown and where it comes from. You can choose to only buy food from companies that are involved with protecting biodiversity and buy produce that has not been contaminated with pesticides.
- Read up on the [importance of biodiversity](#). Then take a look at how the diversity of our food crops have decreased since 1903 via this [infographic](#) from the National Geographic.
- Be informed about the [United Nation's efforts](#) on preserving the environment.
- Learn [how to read the front panel](#) label parts of pesticides so that you can choose natural pesticides instead of toxic ones.
- Find out [who funds research](#) for sustainable farming and support those organizations.
- Rachel Carson opened the eyes of the world to DDT on *Silent Spring*. Read a [summary](#) of her work or pick up a copy of the book.

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