

It's time to revisit the Clopyralid issue. Manufactured by Dow AgroSciences Clopyralid is an herbicide used in agriculture to kill clover, thistle and dandelions. It is also used on golf-courses and by lawncare businesses. ChemLawn uses a product with Clopyralid. Tradenames containing Clopyralid are: Confront, Curtail, Stinger, Millenium, Transline, Tordon and Grazon.

Clopyralid is extremely slow to biodegrade. Composting often negates the undesirable effects of many chemicals, however Clopyralid persists to the parts per billion after two or more years of composting. Plants vulnerable to Clopyralid are tomatoes, peas, beans, potatoes, sunflowers and plants in the families compositae, leguminosae and solanacea. Numerous plants fall into the compositae category (think daisies, chrysanthemum, asters and plants resembling them).

This year when ordering commercial compost ask your supplier if the compost is Clopyralid-free. If it isn't don't purchase it. LRI and Cedar Grove have Clopyralid-free compost available this year but check with your supplier to confirm this. Currently bioassays are being performed on Kitsap County Fair Compost. The Fair folks won't sell the compost this year if it isn't Clopyralid free.

Avoid composting lawn clippings if you've used weed and feed products. If you use a service like ChemLawn make sure they aren't using Clopyralid.

You can perform bioassays on your own compost or compost you've already purchased. Mary Fauci (509-335-4092 mfauci@wsu.edu) from WSU gives directions on the WSU website css.wsu.edu/compost/compost. This website is being updated frequently to keep us apprised of the Clopyralid situation.

Fauci recommends: on tomatoes and beans use 6-inch diameter pots (three or four) with three seeds per pot. Four bean seeds per pot are sown and thinned to three. For pea, use one small "6-pack" container per test and plant two seeds per cell. Use one part compost to three parts potting soil. You'll also plant the same number of plants in a straight potting soil mix (this is the control planting).

Clopyralid results in cupping and distorting of leaves. Plants can also die before setting a second set of leaves. If the pure potting soil plants germinate and look healthy and the ones in the compost mixture don't look healthy you'll know there is a high probability of Clopyralid contamination.

Dan Caldwell from WSU can also be contacted at 509-336-1354 or dcaldwell@wsu.edu for information if your garden soil has been contaminated with Clopyralid.

You can also contact our local WSU Kitsap Cooperative Extension Office at 337-7157. The office can send you information on Clopyralid or direct you to WSU scientists for advice and information.

Contact Peg with questions or comments in care of this newspaper or via email at gardenmentor@yahoo.com.