

For everyone's sake, educate yourself on lawn chemicals

Hearing the first sounds of a proud (and amorous) male cardinal high in a treetop the last week of February reminded me that spring is coming. And, with spring coming, many of you will be making decisions that might impact that cardinal, but that for sure will impact other critters.



NATURENUT
Greg Munson

toxic chemicals, especially for children. It is proven science that during developmental years, children are much more susceptible to the harmful effects of environmental contaminants than the rest of the population.

A second reason, which I find even more amazing, is to spray chemicals for **aesthetic purposes**, or to "keep up with the Joneses." The millions of tons of lawn-care chemicals put on yards each growing season means indiscriminate killing of, or reduction in food supplies for, butterflies and bees, with the former being something many of us value seeing, and the latter a group of insects much of our food supply is dependent upon.

Children and pets are also exposed to these chemicals, which are also a known source of contamination of rivers, lakes and streams, and can be found in the groundwater supplies we rely upon.

Somehow we have been convinced by providers of these chemicals that perfectly manicured monoculture lawns are the societal norm, and to deviate from them is often unacceptable in many neighborhoods.

When thinking about this form



Thousands of fields like this one will soon be inundated with chemicals that may affect the health of humans and the environment.



Photos by Greg Munson

Bees are just one of many organisms that are harmed by the overuse of chemicals.

of environmental degradation, I can't help but think of my daughter's neighborhood in Ann Arbor, Mich., where lawn chemicals are the exception and not the rule, and instead, vegetable gardens, and pollinator gardens for bees and butterflies, are the norm.

As I bike around her neighborhood when visiting, seeing how each yard is used is very interesting and pleasant, not boring like a carpet of Kentucky Bluegrass.

Which brings me to the third and final reason for unleashing harmful chemicals into the environment: to **grow crops**. All one needs to do is drive through the countryside of Southern Minnesota and imagine what things looked like before we significantly altered the natural environment to fit our needs.

Yes, we need to grow food, but do we need to try to feed ourselves, and the world trying to emulate us, steaks? Doing so requires tremendous amounts of water, feed and toxic chemicals, and ultimately is not healthy

for us or the environment.

So, as we crawl out of a thus-far not-so-bad winter, consider educating yourself about chemicals you might unleash on the environment we rely upon, whether it be your yard, home or fields. Then

ask whether you can do without, or at least reduce their use.

Greg Munson is a volunteer naturalist and freelance writer. If you have questions, comments or column ideas, contact Munson at naturenutgm@gmail.com.



Grassy yards will soon be turning green, with many scheduled for numerous applications of toxic chemicals.

How to increase bike use if you don't actually want to use one

I'm not going to ask you to take up biking for transportation.

I admit to being a wimp this winter, but for more than half the year, I bike or walk most of the time I'm getting around town. It saves me money on fuel, gym membership and, likely, therapy.

Transportation is the biggest source of carbon emission in the U.S. A single passenger car emits 4.6 metric tons of carbon dioxide on average per year.

Despite these benefits to me personally, I generally don't proselytize about biking as a choice mode of transportation. I understand many factors play into the decision to bike. Decades of city designs that accommodate only cars don't help, either.

The main reason I don't push other people to choose biking is drivers' behavior. I can come up with counterarguments for almost every excuse (even though I make many of those same excuses, too). Driver behavior around people on bikes is beyond my control and the most dangerous factor.

I've watched people go from "interested but concerned" to



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John Molsheid

hanging up their bikes except for recreational rides on designated trails due entirely to driver behavior on the roads.

So, as much as I'd like to advocate for biking, I think it's better to address drivers than push for cycling.

Cars get you to places quickly; they can also kill instantly. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, 66% of all "preventable" cycling deaths in 2017 involved motor vehicles.

However, most of the instructions we see about bike safety tend to focus on the vulnerable victim, not on drivers.

Several laws are on the books protecting cyclists, but most don't appear on the Department of Motor Vehicles driver's test.



Post Bulletin file photo

A boy stops on his bike and watches traffic on 14th Street Northeast in Rochester last September. The road was repaved and restriped with a dedicated bike lane marked.

Some highlights from Minnesota laws include:

- Giving people on bikes a minimum of 3 feet distance when passing.
- It is illegal to open a car door into the path of someone on a bike.
- People on bikes (and

motorcycles) go through red lights after coming to a stop if the light is triggered by a sensor.

- It is illegal to drive or park a car in a designated bike lane.

Beyond the Minnesota statutes, there are practical things drivers should know about sharing roads with bikes:

- The sidewalk isn't safer. Riding a bike on a sidewalk can be hazardous to pedestrians and to the rider. In downtown, it's actually prohibited.

- People on bikes can sometimes proceed through a red light.

- Bike lanes aren't always safer. This time of year, especially, bike lanes can be full of sand and debris. Sometimes, too, it's safer to be visible in the street than invisible in a bike lane.

- People on bikes don't want to be "treated like cars" — we want to be treated like humans. We want to be able to occupy space on the road without our lives being threatened.

Drivers learning bike-passing and road-sharing best practices can be the most effective change to help save lives, improve the comfort of cycling and encourage bike use.

John Molsheid is a tree-hugging Minnesota transplant making his way through his state parks passport. This column is a space for stories of people doing their part (and more) to keep Minnesota green. Send questions, comments and suggestions to life@postbulletin.com.

Life

Keep clear boundaries with siblings

Dear Annie: I was given up for adoption at 4 months old and was adopted by my maternal grandparents. I was raised as an only child, even though I knew who my siblings were and saw them regularly. My biological mother sowed seeds of hatred and division between my siblings and myself at every opportunity.



DEAR ANNIE

Annie Lane

Upon her death, we found out that she had cashed in her life insurance policies and had no cemetery plot. Now, mind you, I ceased having a relationship with this lady for the last 20 years of her life.

While making the funeral arrangements, I agreed to help my siblings by giving them one of my own burial plots with the understanding that they must pay for the opening and closing and the vault. We all agreed to borrow the money for the funeral, and we all signed the loan. My brother agreed to borrow the money for the opening and closing separately. Two days prior to the funeral, he informed me that he did

not get the loan. I agreed to pay for it with the stipulation that they would reimburse me.

I found out a month after the funeral that he did, in fact, get the loan and blew the money partying. I confronted him about it, and he was irate that I even asked him about it. And in reference to the loan for the funeral, my siblings made just two payments of their share and never brought it up again. So, my wife and I spent \$8,000 of our savings and paid the loan off. I advised them at the next family get-together that I was not going to bury anybody else, and they needed to make sure that they had their affairs in order.

They have said on numerous occasions that I should have taken care

of everything because I had a better job and made the most money. I was made out to be the bad guy because I refused.

Now, their big project is to purchase her a headstone, and they want me to help pay for it. I have told them no on numerous occasions, but my sister brings it up whenever she calls. My wife and I are both retired and are unable to shell out money like we used to. I'm tired and frustrated by all of this. What more can I say or do? — Frustrated Sibling

Dear Frustrated: It's not about what you can do; it's about what you can't do. You can't keep caving to your siblings' will and shelling out money. You've done the right thing in drawing this line. As relationship coach Jenna Korf says, "If someone gets angry with you for setting a boundary, consider that a good sign that the boundary was necessary." Stand your ground. And consider attending a support group such as Families Anonymous, which can help you

lovingly detach from toxic behavior in your family.

Know that sometimes people are intent on holding a grudge, and there's nothing you can say to loosen their grip. That's too bad for them, as they're the ones carrying the weight.

Dear Annie: In response to the challenge from a senior citizen who suggested people donate any unneeded stimulus checks to those who are in need: Challenge accepted and completed! Hopefully, many others take up the challenge. — Two Very Thankful Kona Seniors

Dear Thankful: That is wonderful to hear. There are so many worthy causes in need of financial support: from food banks, to shelters, to suicide-prevention crisis centers, which have seen an increase in calls during the quarantine. Thanks for writing in and further promoting the charitable challenge.

Send your questions for Annie Lane to dearannie@creators.com.



John Molseed / jmoseed@postbulletin.com

Kamau Wilkins speaks to a crowd during a protest Saturday, June 6, at Mayo Park in Rochester in response to the killing of George Floyd while in Minneapolis Police custody.

For some, environmental and racial justice overlap

Local activist explains how the causes are intertwined



GREEN SPACE

John Molseed

Kamau Wilkins is fighting for sustainability.

As chairman of the North Star chapter of the Sierra Club, he's a leading climate activist. He is also the founder of Rochester for Justice. The two roles are not as separate as you'd think.

Black climate activists like Wilkins and Sam Grant, executive director of MN350.org, the state affiliate of 350.org, were at the forefront of calling for policy changes in the wake of the killing of George Floyd, who died at the hands of Minneapolis police.

Like consumption of fossil fuels and the degradation of the environment, Wilkins said racism is a major hurdle to building a sustainable future.

"Race is indelibly tied to every situation we need to work on as a nation," he said.

Wilkins grew up in rural Wisconsin.

"I'm a country boy," he said. "I grew up hunting and fishing."

Fighting for the environment and clean-energy policies might seem like a fit for someone growing up connected to the land. However, it was his activism for racial equity that brought him to the Sierra Club.

"It seemed like a good place to exercise my own voice in black civil rights," he said.

With the Sierra Club comes partnerships, an established history and funding.

It's not a new concept that environmental justice and racial equity are tied together.

Much of the roots of the environmental movement of the 1970s came from residents in inner cities fighting policies that put polluters near poorer

neighborhoods and areas with a higher percentage of ethnic minorities.

"This isn't a new idea," Wilkins said. "It's been around for a long time."

He cited the Energy Transfer Partners' Dakota Access Pipeline through the Standing Rock Sioux land in South Dakota as a recent example.

That the pipelines are routed through indigenous people's territory and poorer areas isn't a coincidence — it's expedience. People with wealth can afford a long, lengthy legal battle against a project that could harm the nearby environment.

"They know it will be easier to get the permits," Wilkins said.

That local police were able to mobilize a military response to protesters of the project shows how police brutality is an obstacle for environmental causes.

Wilkins anticipates an equally contentious battle in Minnesota as Enbridge, an energy transportation company, works to move forward with Line 3 — a pipeline that would cross the Mississippi River headwaters.

The fight against Line 3 will be as much against climate change as it will be for racial equity, he said.

"Indigenous people have the right to a safe environment and clean water," he said.

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Store apps make shopping easier, safer

Dear Heloise: I've found an easier and safer way to shop. I downloaded my favorite stores' apps on my smartphone. Now I know the best price for an item, and I can earn and redeem coupons. Some companies even offer loyalty points.

My credit card information is linked to the store app, so to pay for my purchase, instead of having to swipe my credit card, I just open the app and the cashier scans a barcode for payment.

Tell your readers that a shopping app will help save them time and money. — Sharon in Texas

Dear Readers: You've probably seen the square, scannable symbols on products or in advertising. These are called QR Codes, and they are a type of bar code. Scan the code with the camera on your phone, and a link to a website or a coupon will pop up. Take advantage of the QR code to help with shopping tasks. — Heloise

Dear Heloise: I read with interest a reader's comment in a recent column. She was tired of her children giving her gadgets that are difficult to use to stay in touch with them. She prefers phone calls, but new technology makes it possible to "see" what is going on with family



HINTS FROM HELOISE

members who are far away, using photos and video calls.

I know it's not easy, but I would encourage her to learn to use the gadgets. Maybe the children would be willing to print out some basic instructions for her. If she is able to email and text, for example, the children can send her photos and videos. — Kathy in Nebraska

Dear Heloise: My doctor put me on some pain medicine for an injury, with a follow-up telephone appointment in two weeks.

Each day, after taking the medication as prescribed, I wrote down the date and time of day, my level of any remaining pain, and any side effects or anything weird going on.

This helped both of us manage

my recovery and get me back up and feeling better! — Judy in South Carolina

Judy, I can see how beneficial this would be. It's often difficult to remember specifics when you are face-to-face with your doctor. — Heloise

Dear Readers: We, as Americans, have just been through a difficult time financially. Are you or someone you know struggling to pay the rent? Here are a few things to consider. First, check your lease. You may have a grace period during which a late charge won't be charged. Next, be sure to talk to your landlord. Avoiding a conversation won't make the problem go away. If you are upfront with them about your situation, they may be able to work with you. Be proactive. But, rest assured, you are not alone. This pandemic crisis has caused a lot of hardship for many people. And as always, honesty is the best policy! — Heloise

Send a money-saving or timesaving hint to Heloise, PO Box 795001, San Antonio, TX 78279-5001, or you can fax it to 1-210-HEL-OISE or email it to heloise@heloise.com.

Chocolate

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hazelnut bars, and Roger's special "Wholly Mole" bars, inspired by Mexican mole sauce, including pepitas and pistachios covered in cinnamon, hot pepper, and a bit of garlic.

The finished products are hand-wrapped in bright-colored foil, then placed in a paper sleeve that says, "We hope to honor the labor of the folks

for whom this plant is both sacred and economically vital." They are available for sale directly at Squash Blossom, the People's Food Co-op and the Rochester Farmers Markets.

Waughtal said the hardest thing about making the chocolate may be "not going crazy from the delicious smell of roasting beans."

"For me," Sara said, "the chocolate is special because it represents connection, friendship and solidarity with a group of people who are caretakers of the rainforest."

Volunteer listings

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Life

Urban homesteading is building resilience in the city

On paper, Heidi Kass's Rochester home and property look like any other city lot. Her single-family house sits on a plot of land of about 15,300 total square feet between two other residential plots on the city's Northeast side.

A glimpse of it tells a different story. Almost every available space is occupied by a garden bed or something that supports her gardens or produces food.

Even a steep hill on the property's east side has tiers of raised garden beds. At the foot of the hill is a peach tree.

"My pride and joy," she said.

The backyard is fenced in with a patio and a chicken coop that houses three hens. Along the shaded portion of the north side of her home is a tarp covering an array of logs she uses to grow shiitake mushrooms. Her front yard is a pollinator garden.

A rain barrel collects water from the roof of her garden shed.

"Just that small roof provides a surprising amount of water," she said.

Kass's patio and a drop-off between her land and her neighbor to her west are about the only spots that aren't gardens of some kind. She has her eyes on them as well. A retaining wall could turn the berm into more growing space, and the patio could be replaced with something more permeable.

"There's still a lot of room to do more here," she said.

It's a familiar refrain for urban homesteaders — make use of every square



GREENSPACE
John Molseed

foot of space.

For many urban homesteaders, putting every square foot of space to best use becomes the ultimate — and unattainable — goal.

"There's always something new to learn, or to improve," Kass said. "The more you learn, the more you want to do — at least that's the case for me."

Kass points out even the state of Minnesota is encouraging people to forego keeping only traditional grass lawns, with the state Board of Water & Soil Resources Lawns to Legumes program.

"The state itself is saying we want you to set aside some space for wildlife," she said.

To learn more about urban homesteading, Kass looked around online and found a Southeast Minnesota-based meetup group that had gone inactive. She revived the group and has since watched it grow to more than 170 members. You can learn more about the group, Backyard Bounty Urban Homesteaders, at meetup.com.

Kass said she believes that's in part due to the urban homesteading movement gaining momentum.

"Personally, I think more and more people have become aware of the weaknesses of our current



Photos by John Molseed / jmolseed@postbulletin.com

Heidi Kass shows her cucumber plants Saturday at an urban homesteaders tour stop at her Rochester home.

food system," she said.

In addition to outbreaks of foodborne illnesses, and unsustainable transportation and farming practices, people saw shortages of food due to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.

"It's becoming more clear we need to build community self-reliance and even personal self-reliance."

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Chickens in Heidi Kass' backyard in Rochester.

beads

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beadwork and other related techniques and mediums."

The competition offered \$2,500 worth of prizes to artists and used a panel of six jurors to judge the submissions. The jurors included Diane Fitzgerald, founder of UMBS; Sherry Leedy, owner of the Sherry Leedy Gallery in Kansas City; Barbara Rogers, professor emeritus of painting and drawing at the University of Arizona; Tracy Krumm, director for artistic advancement at the Textile Center; Karla Bloem, the world's leading author on vocalizations of great horned owls in addition to being the executive director of the IOC; and Judy Onofrio, an internationally recognized sculptor from Rochester whose piece "Don't Fence Me In," a mixed-media piece including glass beads and found objects, is part of the collection at the Smithsonian American Art Museum.

'OPEN-ENDED POSSIBILITY'

Onofrio sees beads as an "open-ended possibility" that can be used by artists to create structure, surface, and color.

She gave her juror award ribbon to artist Lynn Zetzman, of Appleton, Wis., for her work "Night Watch." It

includes a brooch formed like an owl that can be removed from a large collage construction including taxidermy animals. The piece also includes quilting and beading.

Onofrio says she was happy to have the opportunity to participate in the local art community on a panel of jurors she admires. She says the jurors made judgments about the submissions based on overall artistic vision, craftsmanship, subject matter, and the use of materials.

"I am fascinated with owls and have a barred owl who visits my willow tree regularly," says Onofrio, who added a huge owl house to her garden this year.

So far, "Whoooo'll Bead for Owls" has raised more than \$5,000 through entry fees and anonymous gifts.

The IOC, the only all-owl education center in the country, was closed for three months this year due to the pandemic, so these funds will help make up lost revenues from admission and gift shop sales to help with owl care, educational programs, and its goal to build a permanent facility.

Becky Pancake, the president of UMBS, says her group will use their portion of the proceeds to present a special beading workshop.

The "Whoooo'll Bead for Owls" exhibition shows how nonprofits can work together to create unique experiences that use creativity to support their missions. A little owl wisdom has helped this event display some beauty while benefiting our feathered friends. Now, owl that's needed is an audience.



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