

EnviroNews

OPQ: Ongoing Pesticide Quandaries

It's back to school for the ABCs and 3Rs, but what about the OPQs in our community?

Hooray! Brentwood may be one of the next communities in Calgary to have a designated Pesticide Free Park! Congratulations on this initiative are due to a local representative of the Chinook Group of the Sierra Club. See the Pesticide Free Park article on page 11.

Please visit www.sierraclubchinook.org/Pesticides/Pesticide.html to find out more about the campaign to stop the cosmetic use of pesticides in our communities.

Thistles galore! But does banning cosmetic use mean no pesticide use at all? Unfortunately, there are circumstances where the judicious use of pesticides seems the only solution. For example, in Whispering Woods in northwest Brentwood, a local volunteer group has been hand pulling thistles for many years. These efforts are proving to be futile, as the infestation has grown at an alarming and unmanageable rate.

Please visit www.virtualsciencefair.org/2006/cock6r2/ for a student documentation of the spread of thistles in this local grassland and parkland natural area.

Thus, the City of Calgary Natural Areas Department sent in a team to spray just the thistles with a selective herbicide called Transline. The aim of this specific administration is to bring the thistle population under control, such that future hand management is successful.

This herbicide was used only in the western areas of the park. The eastern grassland portions, as well as the adjacent Centennial Natureground Prairie Reclamation will continue to be managed by hand pulling.

But then there is still the matter of the smooth brome grass that is marching in on this precious remnant of original rough fescue grassland. There is no selective herbicide for this species, and the jury is still out on how to best preserve the rich but threatened biodiversity of this special space.

Weed conference! The Alberta Invasive Plants Council is hosting the 2006 North American Weed Management

Association Conference [NAWMA] right here in Calgary, September 18 to 21. On the agenda, not only will agricultural weed issues be discussed, but also the threat of invasive plants in our urban and suburban areas, as well as those in our natural areas and parks. Please visit www.invasiveplants.ab.ca/ to find out more about these organizations and the meeting.

Organics!

Meanwhile, you can still get your organic, local, pesticide free fruits and veggies from the Grassroots Northland

Farmers' Market every Tuesday from 3:30 to 7:30 p.m. on the east side of Northland Mall. Remember that all proceeds from this nonprofit market go toward local environmental education initiatives, such as raising awareness about pesticides! For more information, call 282-2014 or e-mail environews@shaw.ca.

Environmentally yours,

Polly Lee Knowlton Cockett



Sticky Purple Geranium and other native plants still thrive after careful application of selective herbicide on the invasive alien, Creeping Thistle, in Whispering Woods, August 2006.