

# 'Dinosaur' view needs wiping out

BY CORRIE KOST, JOHN HUNTER AND BRIAN PLATTS, NORTH SHORE NEWS    SEPTEMBER 9, 2011

Dear Editor:

Todd Major's Aug. 24 column, Dinosaurs are in our Gardens, is, in our opinion, blinded with antiscience and arrogance.

Kitchen salt is more dangerous to children than the weed killer 2,4-D, the main target of alarmists. This chemical has been studied extensively by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the European Union and its Canadian equivalent - PMRA of Health Canada - and all have determined that it is biodegradable, has no demonstrable link to cancer and is safe (just like salt) when used as directed.

Drinking too much potable water has killed people but, like 2,4-D, it is safe if used in moderation; it's all about the dosage.

Pesticides sold for residential use are no more "cosmetic" for our lawns and gardens than paint is for our houses. Lack of these cosmetics has an impact: In May, for example, the Toronto Star reported that 82 per cent of Toronto residents felt the area's pesticide ban had hurt the city's appearance. For an example closer to home, look at the mess of weeds in the District of North Vancouver.

To quote Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not to his own facts." Unfortunately, unsupported and false "facts" result when emotions dominate debate.

There is a myth that natural is better than "scientifically" produced products. A question we put to friends is: "What fraction of man-made substances is carcinogenic?" Answer: about half. We then ask: "What fraction of natural substances is carcinogenic?" Surprisingly, the answer is also about half.

Further, man-made pesticides are extensively tested for safety, but natural ones are often not.

Mr. Major wonders why municipal golf courses use pesticides. It's because natural methods are ineffective and/or too costly.

The City of Hamilton's Pesticide sub-committee estimated its weed control costs would increase from \$75,000 a year to nearly \$12 million in moving to supposed alternatives to manufactured pesticides. When weed levels in city parks reached certain levels, the municipality used 2,4-D to get them back under control.

Lastly, Mr. Major laments that a municipal council "rolled their eyes" and ignored his anti-pesticide presentation.

In our opinion, given the tone of his recent column, we understand the council's reaction, assuming he presented the same attitude on that occasion.

Corrie Kost, John Hunter, Brian Platts North Vancouver

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