Canadian Garden Centers Face Pesticide Pressures and Bans

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Like it or not, Canadian gardeners may have to learn how to get by without many of their conventional pest control products. With laws banning pesticide use in many towns and provinces and the recent announcement that Home Depot Canada plans to phase out traditional pesticides from their store shelves by the end of 2008, retailers will bear the weight of finding alternative solutions and educating customers about them.

Home Depot’s announcement of their phase-out plan this spring followed on the heels of Ontario introducing legislation that will ban both the use and sale of more than 300 pesticides by the end of 2009. Quebec has had a ban on the use and sale of cosmetic pesticides on private property (excluding farming/greenhouse and forestry operations) since 2006. And some 55 or so Canadian municipalities have passed various bans on the residential use of pesticides. (When lawn-care companies took the town of Hudson to court over their ban, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled against the lawn-care companies.)

While some Canadian garden centers have already eliminated pesticides from their shelves or faced local bans on residential use, Home Depot was the first national home improvement retailer to voluntary do a phase-out; they’ll eliminate some 60 products from all 166 of their Canadian stores. Canadian Tire countered with a “Promoting Healthy Lawns” campaign this past spring and made a public announcement of their support for the Ontario legislation, saying they’d stop selling cosmetic pesticides—in Ontario—by the end of this summer.

In a company press release, Annette Verschuren, president of The Home Depot Canada and Asia, said, “Our stores will prominently feature green pesticide alternatives, in addition to our current Eco Options products, and our trained associates will continue to provide customers with product information and tips, as well as online support.” Product categories currently affected by The Home Depot’s voluntary phase-out include herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, slug baits, moss control products and lawn fertilizers with weed control.