

## SOLID MATERIALS

Your private or municipal system can process only toilet paper, which is designed to fall apart rapidly.

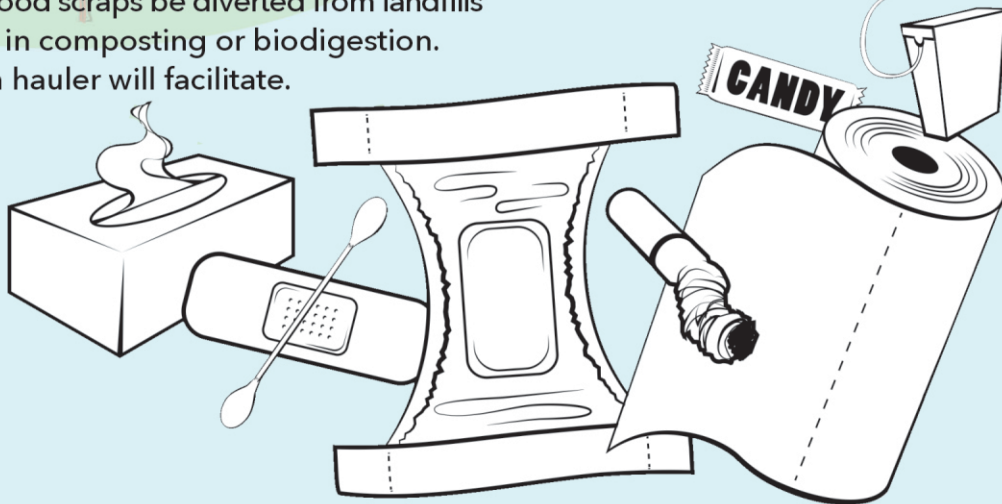
**Never flush** household solid waste such as paper, cloth, or plastic film, even if the package says it's "flushable." Those "flushable" wipes are a leading cause of serious clogs - never flush them!

These items don't dissolve. They mix with fats, oils, and greases, creating clogs that require costly repairs. They can also cause sewage overflows into rivers and lakes.

## SOLID MATERIALS DISPOSAL

Toss household solid waste materials into the trash for pickup, or take them to your municipal drop-off. Don't try to burn or compost them (except food scraps)!

**Food scraps** also cause clogs - and in-sink disposals don't help! Compost them if you can. Vermont law requires that by July, 2020, all food scraps be diverted from landfills and used in composting or biodigestion. Your trash hauler will facilitate.



## NEVER FLUSH

The following common household items should never be flushed:

- Paper towels
- Disposable diapers
- Tampons & applicators
- Sanitary napkins
- Hair
- Rags
- Dryer lint
- Cleaning/disinfectant wipes
- Cigarette butts
- Q-Tips
- Dental floss
- Bandages
- Condoms
- Cotton balls
- Facial tissues
- Flushable wipes
- Candy wrappers

# DON'T FLUSH IT!



## VOLUME 1: CLOGGERS!

How to save money and hassle - and protect the environment - by knowing what NOT to flush or pour into your septic tank or municipal sewer system.

**RULE #1:** Sewage treatment systems, big or small, are designed to handle pee, poo, and toilet paper. That's it! Everything else causes problems.

# FATS, OILS, & GREASES

**Never pour fats, oils, or greases (a.k.a. FOGs) into sink, toilet, or storm drain!**

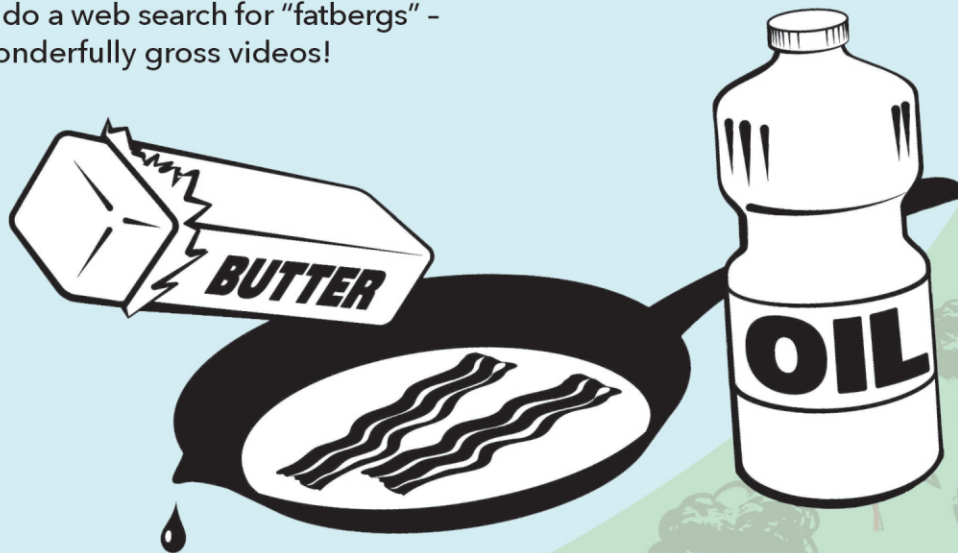
When they solidify, FOGs impair performance and require pumping or replacement of small septic systems. FOG clogs in public sewer pipes and pumps cause breakdowns that result in sewer overflows and costly repairs. Either way, you pay.

FOGs combine with solid materials - see opposite side - and create "fatbergs." These horror-story clogs cost New York City taxpayers \$20 million a year. Some towns in Vermont pay up to \$40,000 in avoidable clog repairs.

- In-sink disposals do not dissolve FOGs!

**Don't put FOGs into compost.** They can attract pests and slow the composting process.

For more information on damage caused by clogs, do a web search for "fatbergs" - lots of wonderfully gross videos!



# FOG SOLUTIONS

## Bacon Grease & Deep-Fry Oil:

- Save in a jar and re-use. Do a web search for "what to do with bacon grease" for great food recipes and advice on how to make soap, candles, lip balm, bird food, and more.
- Let cool until solidified, then wrap and dispose of in your trash.
- When warm, pour into a sealable jar or directly into your trash bag among absorbent materials.
- Wipe warm pans with a paper towel before washing; toss towels in trash.

## Regular Frying & Salad Oil:

- Wipe all frying pans when butter, fat, or oil is still warm, then wash.
- Wipe salad bowls before washing. Use paper towels and dispose of them in the trash.

This is the first of four brochures produced by Green Mountain Water Environment Association (GMWEA), thanks to a grant from the Lake Champlain Basin Program, with project support from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns and your municipality. Future editions will cover other pollutants typical households flush, pour, or spill into their wastewater stream.

GMWEA sincerely thanks the Castleton Content Lab, Castleton University, for brochure design & illustration!



Green Mountain  
Water Environment  
Association

89 Main Street, Ste. 4  
Montpelier, VT 05602

(802) 229-9111 • [www.gmwea.org](http://www.gmwea.org)

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## PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS (PCPs)

**Many consumer products for body care & comfort also put unnatural chemicals into septic systems and wastewater facilities.**

Traces pass through or wash off our bodies, and many can't be removed by wastewater treatment plants. They can end up in groundwater, rivers, and lakes, damaging fish and other aquatic wildlife. Some can show up in public drinking water sources.

Common PCPs that contain harmful chemicals include perfume, hair dye, hair gel, home permanent kits, insect repellent, sunscreen, deodorant, body washes, fungicides, cosmetics, shaving products, steroid creams, and antimicrobial lotions. Nail polish and remover are particularly toxic.

And it's not just about wildlife. Health authorities also consider these to be "contaminants of emerging concern" that can be detrimental to human health.

For example, the U.S. EPA warns, "Emissions of siloxane, a common ingredient in shampoos, lotions, and deodorants, are comparable in magnitude to the emissions of major components of vehicle exhaust, such as benzene, from rush-hour traffic."

Doesn't the government regulate them? No, not much. PCPs are not food, so their safety is not tested or controlled by the Food and Drug Administration.

## PCP SOLUTIONS

**Never pour or flush** unwanted or leftover PCPs, including pet shampoos and flea treatments. Just seal the container tightly and throw it in the trash.

**Avoid buying** highly-perfumed hair or skin products; limit use of antibacterial washes and lotions.

**Check ingredients.** Some brands are more harmful than others. For example, sunscreen residues are highly damaging to marine environments; the solution is simply to avoid buying brands that contain oxybenzone and octinoxate.

**Skip these if you can.** PCPs contain thousands of chemicals; some aren't so bad, but others show up frequently in health and environmental warnings. Among the "top ten worst":

- Phthalates
- Parabens
- Formaldehyde
- Siloxane (drug name often ends in -methicone)
- Diethanolamine (DEA)

**Learn more:** Visit [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov), [www.healthline.com](http://www.healthline.com), or [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com) and search "personal care products" or "PCPs."

# DON'T FLUSH IT!



## VOLUME 2: DRUGS! & Personal Care Products

**How to protect your health - and the environment - by knowing what NOT to flush or pour into your septic tank or municipal sewer system.**

**Pharmaceuticals and personal care products (PPCPs) should not go into toilets or sinks. These man-made chemicals are common in every home, but can enter ground and surface waters and harm human and ecosystem health.**

## DRUGS!

**Never dispose of any medication -- whether prescription or over-the-counter -- in your sink drain or toilet!**

Septic systems and wastewater treatment plants are not designed to remove pharmaceuticals. These unnatural chemicals can linger in groundwater, rivers, and lakes, harming fish, frogs, and other wildlife. Traces can show up in drinking water sources, with negative health effects on humans. Also, some antibiotics and antibacterials can impair performance of septic systems and wastewater facilities.

Unused antibiotics, birth control pills, anti-seizure medications, anti-depressants, diet pills, painkillers, hormone supplements, antibacterials, nasal sprays, cough medicines, mood stabilizers, sleep aids - whether pill, liquid, cream, spray, or patch - should be disposed of so they can't be abused by someone else or enter your wastewater stream.



## PHARMACEUTICAL SOLUTIONS

**Drop them off.** Vermont's free drug drop-off disposal program offers 84 sites throughout the state. To find one near you, call (802) 651-1550, or visit:

[www.healthvermont.gov/alcohol-drugs/services/prescription-drug-disposal](http://www.healthvermont.gov/alcohol-drugs/services/prescription-drug-disposal)

You can also request a free envelope by which to mail unused medications for safe disposal.

**Trash them.** The Water Environment Federation recommends:

1. If disposing of a prescription drug, cross out any personal information on your medicine bottle.
2. Empty the medicine into a sealable, disposable container. Add cat litter, coffee grounds, or other undesirable substance to discourage abuse.
3. Dispose of the sealed container in your household trash. Don't compost or incinerate.

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## ALTERNATIVE CLEANSERS

**Want safer, cheaper alternatives that really WORK?** Try baking soda, vinegar, and lemon juice. (Use table salt for extra scrubbing power.)

**Clean sinks, tubs, toilets:** Scrub using a paste of baking soda with dish soap.

**Kill mildew:** Wipe with straight vinegar, let dry, wash with soap and hot water.

**Clear clogged drains:** Pour in baking soda & vinegar; let sit 15 minutes; rinse with boiling water.

**Eliminate stains, odors:** Lemon juice! Put on undiluted, let sit, wash off. (Lemon also dissolves lime/mineral deposits! Leave on overnight, scrub off.)

**Find more alternative cleaning and disinfection options** at Addison County Solid Waste District's terrific website: [www.addisoncountycycles.org/hazwaste/reduce/toxic-products](http://www.addisoncountycycles.org/hazwaste/reduce/toxic-products).

## MORE INFORMATION

**For more information on all of Vermont's waste districts and alliances, visit** [dec.vermont.gov/waste-management/solid/local-districts](http://dec.vermont.gov/waste-management/solid/local-districts).

**Check out the other three "Don't Flush It!" brochures** for advice that will save you money, protect your health, and keep our natural waters and wells clean. Find them at [www.gmwea.org](http://www.gmwea.org).

**And remember: Never flush so-called "flushable wipes!" They're NOT!**

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# DON'T FLUSH IT!

VOLUME 4:

## HOUSE & GARAGE HAZARDS!



Common household products may be readily available, but they can damage septic systems and municipal sewer plants -- and many pose danger to human health and the environment.

Never put them into toilets, sinks, or storm drains, or onto driveways or soil.  
**SEE INSIDE FOR HELPFUL TIPS!**

## HOME WATER POLLUTION HAZARDS

The average Vermont home uses hundreds of man-made chemicals that can impair septic systems and municipal sewer plants, damage human health, and poison the environment. Keep them out of streams, rivers, lakes, groundwater, or wells by following these simple rules:

1. If the label uses the words *danger*, *toxic*, *caution*, *hazard*, *warning*, *poisonous*, *corrosive* – believe it! They’re legally “hazardous materials.”
2. Never flush or pour them out, indoors or outside! Keep them off driveways and sidewalks, and out of storm drains, soil, and streams.
3. Buy smart - read the label, seek natural ingredients – and use sparingly.
4. Dispose of unused/unwanted materials properly – see below!
5. Try natural and homemade alternatives – see tips on back panel.

## HOUSEHOLD

These products are hazardous – never flush or pour them out! Store them safely until you can take them to a disposal site or collection event provided by your local solid waste management entity.

- Carpet & upholstery cleaners
- Chlorine bleach
- Deck cleaners
- Drain clearing chemicals
- Dry cleaning fluid
- Floor cleaners & waxes
- Furniture polish
- Mildew/mold killers
- Moth balls
- Oil-based paint
- Paint thinners & strippers
- Rust remover
- Swimming pool chemicals
- Tub & tile cleaners
- Turpentine
- Wood stains & preservatives

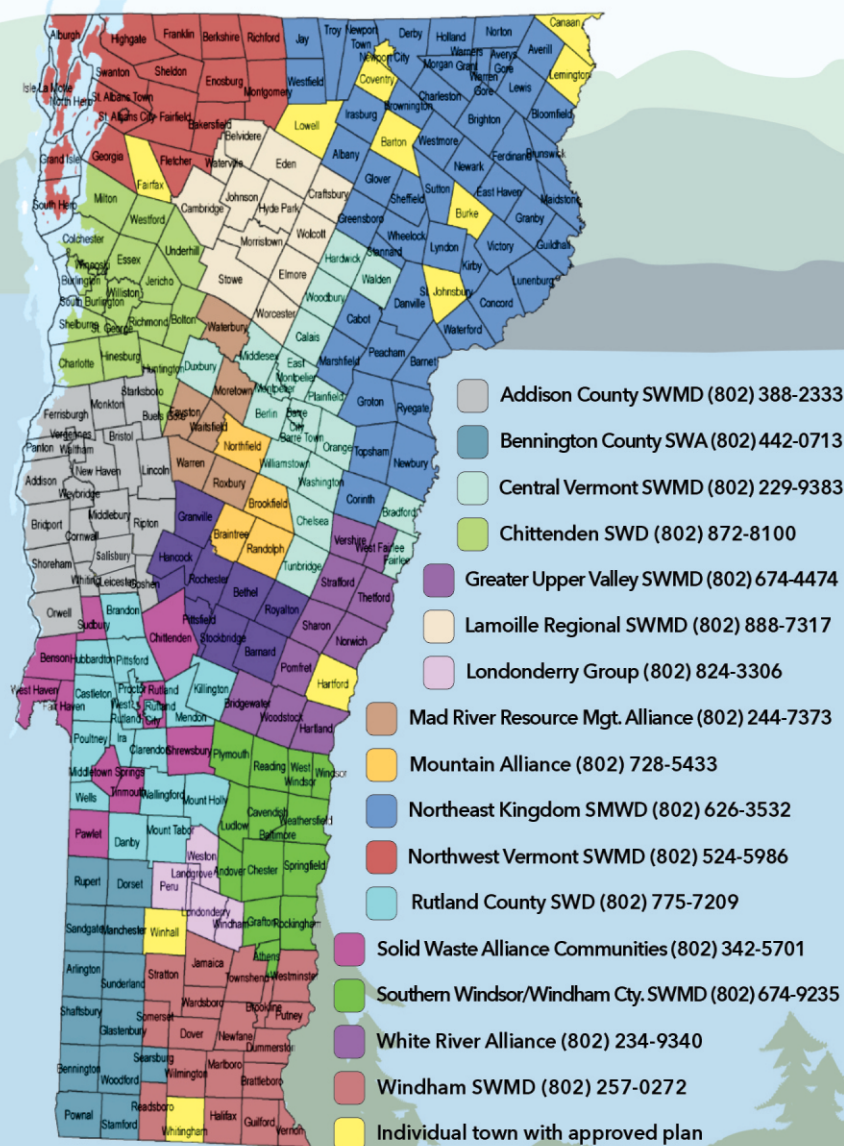
## GARAGE & WORKSHOP

If it's in your garage or workshop, it's probably hazardous. Never flush or pour these *anywhere* – not even in floor drains, driveway, street, soil, or curb storm drains. Take them to locations or collection events offered by your solid waste entity.

- Antifreeze
- Battery acid
- Body filler products
- Brake & transmission fluid
- Cutting oil
- Fuel additives
- Gasoline
- Diesel fuel
- Kerosene
- Liquid car wax
- Motor oil

## CONTACT YOUR LOCAL SOLID WASTE ENTITY TO FIND DISPOSAL LOCATIONS & COLLECTION EVENTS.

If you live in a town with an independent waste plan, contact your town clerk or transfer station for safe disposal options.



SEE BACK PANEL FOR MORE TIPS & RESOURCES!

## IDENTIFY THE WORST POISONS - FIND THE BEST ALTERNATIVES!

The National Pesticide Information Center provides fact sheets on all pesticides and lists natural and minimal-risk alternatives. NPIC's website is easy and fun to use; you can also e-mail or call them with any inquiry.

- Website: [npic.orst.edu](http://npic.orst.edu)
- E-mail: [npic@ace.orst.edu](mailto:npic@ace.orst.edu)
- Phone: 1 (800) 858-7378

## LEARN MORE ABOUT INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT!

The U. of California offers a terrific one-stop resource on IPM. Their "Quick Tips Library" includes garden and lawn care advice, lists synthetic pesticide alternatives, and details info on every kind of critter (beneficial or pest) and every plant or crop.

- [imp.ucanr.edu/QT/index.html](http://imp.ucanr.edu/QT/index.html)

## SKIP CHEMICAL FERTILIZERS!

There are many easy and safe soil-care options - and they're often cheaper and more effective than toxic chemicals. Explore the handy guides at these sites:

- [epa.gov/nutrientpollution](http://epa.gov/nutrientpollution)
- [gardeners.com/how-to](http://gardeners.com/how-to)
- [planetnatural.com/organic-gardening-guru](http://planetnatural.com/organic-gardening-guru)

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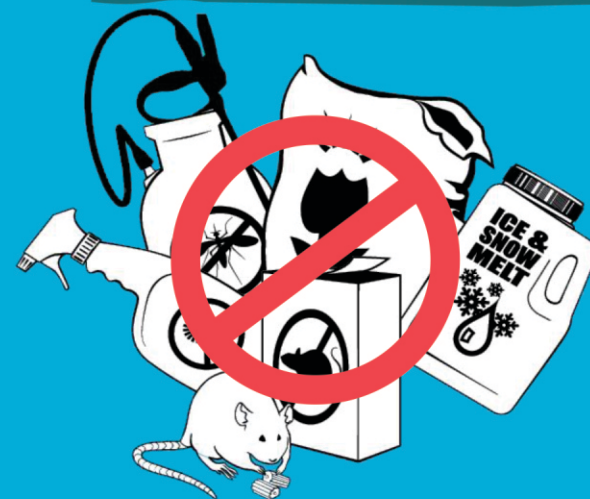
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# DON'T FLUSH IT!

## VOLUME 3: LAWN & GARDEN POISONS!



Pesticides and chemical fertilizers can run off your property into natural waters and wells, endangering human health and poisoning the environment.

Fortunately, there are many ways  
**YOU** can protect Vermont's waters!  
**SEE INSIDE FOR SOLUTIONS!**

## THE BAD GUYS

**Pesticides** - insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, rodent poisons - are **hazardous materials** that kill helpful plants and cause death and deformities in birds, fish, frogs, bees, and bats. In humans, they can cause birth defects, cancer, male infertility, Parkinson's disease, and other illnesses.

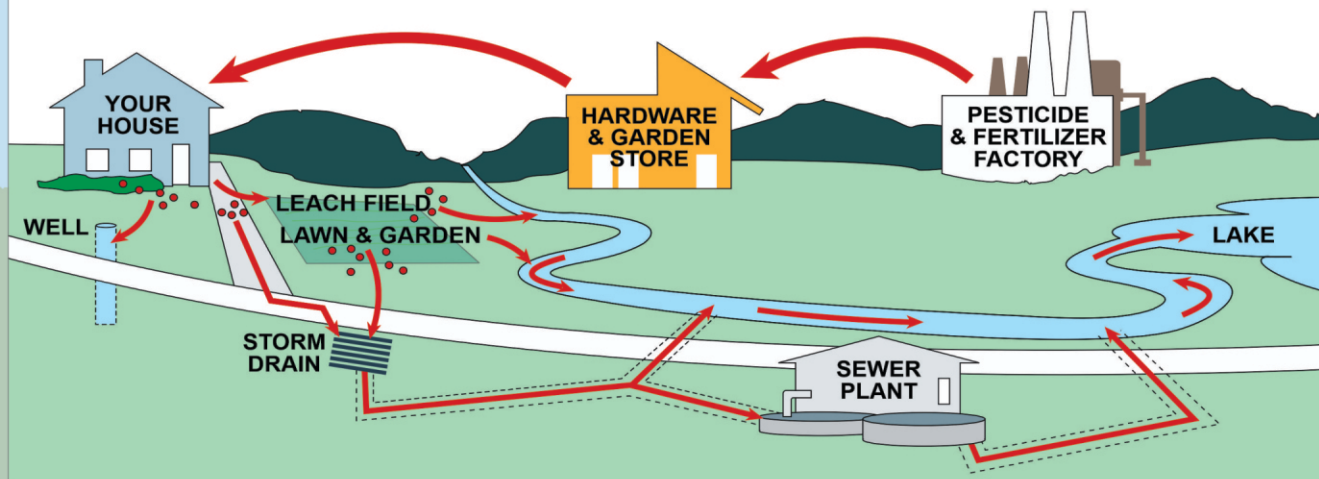
**Commercial fertilizers** feed toxic blue-green algae in Vermont lakes. Those soupy blooms are not just ugly but dangerous! They wipe out fish and can cause liver and brain damage in humans and pets.

When these chemicals run off your property into streams, groundwater, public storm-water systems, and wells - they wreak havoc.



**Can't septic tanks and public sewer plants eliminate these toxic chemicals? Nope! They can only pass them on to soil and water!**

## IT'S UP TO YOU TO BREAK THE TOXIC CHAIN!



## SOLUTIONS

Note: The tips below are just a few from Integrated Pest Management, the way to control pests that's advocated by the U.S. EPA and U.S. Dept. of Agriculture. See other side for links to hundreds more, specific and easy-to-follow tips.

**1. Dispose of chemicals properly - never put into toilet, sink, storm drain, or driveway!** Vermont's 16 solid waste management districts/alliances offer safe disposal of unwanted hazardous materials. To find your local waste entity, visit [dec.vermont.gov/waste-management/solid/local-districts](http://dec.vermont.gov/waste-management/solid/local-districts). If you live in a town that manages its own waste, check with your town clerk or transfer station to find disposal options.

**Each waste management entity offers drop-off locations and collection events for these chemicals.**

**2. Manage conditions so pests aren't drawn to, or don't thrive on, your property.** Example: Drain standing water to eliminate mosquitos.

**3. Encourage pests' natural, biological enemies.** Example: Spread milky spore in lawn to get rid of Japanese beetles.

**4. Physically, mechanically, discourage plant and animal pests.** Example: Weed by hand; use mousetraps instead of poison.

**5. Use natural alternatives; choose products with least impact.** Read the label before you buy; use enclosed bait stations, not sprays.

**6. Build soil with organic materials.** Naturally healthy soil helps lawns and gardens grow - and resists pests, too. Use compost; buy fertilizers formulated to soak in, not run off.

**7. Control runoff.** Keep pesticides and fertilizers off sidewalk or driveway; leave a buffer zone of untreated grass or wild vegetation around lawns and gardens.



**Discover more easy alternatives to toxic pesticides and chemical fertilizers! Visit the websites listed on the other side.**