

# Rules of Thumb for Herbicide Use

It is a jungle out there or so it seems that way when weeds start growing in yards and driveways. But, a jungle of weeds is not as bad as careless and excessive herbicide use that can cause irreversible damage to the environment. Herbicides are used to kill weeds and plants and contain toxic materials that pose both environmental and human health risks. Humans, animals, aquatic organisms, and plants can be severely harmed by these toxic chemicals. Rain or heavy watering can wash herbicides down lawns and driveways, into the streets and gutters, and down the storm drains. Once down the storm drains, the untreated toxins flow into channels and underground streams that lead to major water sources: Mill Creek, Otter Creek, and Salt River. These waterways discharge their contents directly into the Ohio River and the Mississippi River. The toxins contaminate the rivers and lakes and harm ecological systems by killing beneficial fish and vegetation.

“Proper mowing, fertilizing and watering can significantly reduce the amount of chemicals a lawn needs,” says Harold Brown, manager of the City’s storm water program. “If possible, avoid treating an entire lawn with herbicides, instead spot treat. Following good, basic lawn care methods will usually result in a healthy lawn which will make it difficult for many weeds to exist. Patience and a little elbow grease in pulling or digging out the weeds may not be as easy as using herbicides, but it is good exercise and better for lawns and the environment.”

However, if herbicides are needed, here are a few tips for avoiding herbicide runoff:

- Always read and follow the product's directions.
- Never apply herbicides when a heavy rain is anticipated.
- Apply the minimum amount necessary.
- Avoid spraying chemicals on a windy day, and make sure the area has dried thoroughly before letting children and pets play on the grass.
- Avoid spilling or spraying excess herbicides onto the surrounding paved sidewalks or driveways. The herbicides cannot be absorbed into the ground and will wash down the storm drain when it rains. If you do spill herbicides, sweep them up, do not wash them into the streets.
- Dispose of excess herbicides properly.

For more information about storm water pollution and how to keep our environment clean, call Radcliff City Hall at (270) 351-4714 or visit our website at [www.radcliff.org](http://www.radcliff.org).