Brought to you by —

To help communicate the significant and diverse benefits of pesticides. If you find this booklet helpful and would like copies or more information on a particular topic, please contact us.

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Our goal is to share easy-to-understand, scientifically accurate information about pesticides and their use. Please help us in this goal by becoming an advocate for vegetation management and the products we use.

Additional resources

National Pesticide Information Center: http://npic.orst.edu/

EPA's Pesticide Home Page:
http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/about/index.htm

Washington State University Pest Management Resources:
http://extension.wsu.edu/wsprs/Pages/Garden.aspx

Benefits of Pesticides

Understanding why pesticides are used for

Vegetation Management

Pesticide safety and regulation

Every pesticide must be thoroughly tested and registered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) before it can legally be sold or used in the United States. Pesticides must be used according to the directions on the label. Any other use is illegal.

Pesticide use is also regulated by the Washington State Departments of Agriculture, Labor & Industries and Ecology. Pesticide applicators must be licensed by the Department of Agriculture. An applicator who applies pesticides illegally is subject to disciplinary action including fines, license suspension or revocation or more depending on the situation.

The research and development process to bring a new pesticide to market is long and expensive. It often takes 10 years or more and costs hundreds of millions of dollars for each potential product. After all that, only one product out of approximately 140,000 researched ever makes it to the market.

EPA sets limits for pesticide residue in food and animal feed. These limits have extra safety factors built in to ensure that the most sensitive populations, like children, will be protected.

Pesticides are designed to act on their target pest (insect, weed or disease). Because herbicides are designed to kill plants, most are nontoxic to people and pets.

Testing and evaluation does not end when a product is approved for sale. Pesticides are periodically evaluated and must be re-registered.

Cover photo: City of Redmond

Vegetation Management

Out-of-control vegetation increases risks for drivers, damages roads and increases fire danger. In many situations, herbicides provide the most cost effective, efficient control of unwanted vegetation.

Safety first

Tall vegetation can obscure road signs and visibility around corners. When vegetation grows unchecked along roadsides, rainwater can be trapped and puddle on the roadway, causing a driving hazard. During summer months, fires begin in dry roadside vegetation. In the winter, shaded roads remain frosty and slick. A weed-free shoulder provides a safer place for drivers to pull off the road in an emergency.

Mowing and manual removal of debris buildup around guardrails is inefficient, expensive, and labor intensive. When soil, organic material and debris is scraped from the shoulder and guardrails, it exposes soil that is highly prone to erosion. This sediment can run into salmon-bearing streams where it harms habitat. The scraped material is expensive to dispose of because it contains contaminants. Well-timed use of herbicides along roadsides reduces the need for workers and machinery on the roadway, reducing danger, cost and environmental impact.

Noxious weeds

Plants can be designated as noxious weeds if they are invasive, non-native plants that threaten local ecosystems, fish and wildlife habitat or agricultural crops. Included are rapidly spreading plants such as Scotch broom and Canadian thistle; plants toxic to livestock such as tansy; aquatic plants that choke lakes and rivers; and plants that are harmful to people. By law, many noxious weeds must be controlled. Often, herbicides are the only viable option for control.

Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM)

IVM is a multi-pronged approach to vegetation management that may include herbicides, biological (cinnabar moths for tansy control), cultural (establishing native species), manual and mechanical techniques. The desired outcome is vegetation that does not interfere with road maintenance, power lines or pose a fire hazard.