

Are your habits a public threat?

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I have mentioned in the past couple of years that Ohio State University Extension Educators are responsible for teaching Pesticide Applicator Training for the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

By attending these classes, private pesticide applicators (farms, greenhouses, nurseries, fruit and vegetable growers) receive training on the proper use of pesticides and then after passing a test, receive their license.

This license allows them to purchase specific pesticides to be used on the job. It also requires applicators to keep records and track the who, what, when, where and why pesticides were applied.

Overall I have to say that farmers do a very good job of managing pesticide applications. They are stewards of the environment and look for methods to decrease inputs (fertilizer, pesticides) and to increase outputs (crop production).

Therefore, they do a pretty good job of scouting fields and spraying pesticides only when needed; they do a good job of testing the soil so that they know the right amount of nutrients to use.

In addition to this pesticide license, these farmers/growers are also required to obtain Fertilizer Certification if they are applying fertilizer on 50 acres or more. This is required under the new agricultural nutrient law Senate Bill 150 and is needed to be completed before September 30 of this year.

Our Extension Educators are also responsible for teaching this certification as well.

This training and certification is one of the management practices taken by ODA to help prevent many of the problems that we are seeing in our lakes and rivers.

The Fertilizer Certification training on several topics including fertilizer and manure regulations, water quality issues related to agriculture, soil sampling, best management practices for nutrients, and more.

The bottom line is that agriculture is focused on the water quality issues and doing what they can to be good stewards.

What are consumers doing? What are you doing? Have you done a soil test recently? Do you apply fertilizers to your lawn and garden without really knowing what nutrients are needed for the crop in question?

How about your lawn care company? Do they sweep up any remaining granules that end up on the drive or sidewalk? This drives me crazy!

Do you try to determine if a pesticide is really needed before you grab the spray bottle? And when you spray, do you target the pest problem as opposed using a coverall spray that kills anything?

I urge you to take a look at your gardening practices and determine if they lead to good stewardship. Farmers and growers are doing their part – consumers should too!