

Here's something that I copied quite a while ago from a Rodale publication - about Miracle grow.

Carol M

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Miracle-Gro is a synthetic fertilizer that contains ammonium phosphate, ammonia sulfate, and several other chemicals that can be toxic to your soil and plants.

It is prohibited from use in certified-organic farming. Here's what soil expert Robert Parnes, Ph.D., says in his book Fertile Soil: "[Ammonium fertilizer] acidifies the soil, and thus it is probably more harmful to soil organisms than any other nitrogen fertilizer . . . . The application has to be timed carefully and placed properly to avoid burning the leaves and roots . . . . In addition, ammonium tends to inhibit the release of . . . potassium . . . . Ammonium fertilizers are deliberately manufactured to be spread at high application rates in order to obtain maximum yields with no regard to adverse effects on the soil. Probably nowhere is the conflict between the mass production of food to feed the world and the preservation of the soil more obvious than in the confrontation over the use of either ammonium fertilizers or liquid ammonia."

And there's more: long-term studies at the University of Wisconsin have shown that acidic chemical fertilizers are causing serious, permanent damage to our soils. Usually these fertilizers are also highly soluble, so they leach away and pollute our water systems, too. Soil fertility authority Garn Wallace, Ph.D., of Wallace Laboratories in El Segundo, California, points out that Miracle-Gro contains muriate of potash, which contains excess chlorine that will burn plants and inhibit the uptake of nitrogen. Dr. Wallace also warns that products such as Miracle-Gro often contain unsafe levels of zinc and copper that will be toxic to soil life.

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And if all that's not enough to convince you to avoid this stuff, consider this: you have to mix Miracle-Gro with water and apply it every "7 to 14 days." If you opt to fertilize organically, on the other hand, all you have to do is mix a 1/2-inch layer of grass clippings into your beds before each crop. As the grass decomposes, it will improve your soil's texture and stimulate microbial life and help prevent disease, all the while releasing plenty of nutrients to feed your plants.

(For full details on organic fertilizers, see "How to Fertilize Your Garden," Organic Gardening, July/August 2000.)

Soil being everything, soil must contain Life in the form of microscopic bacteria and other weird looking life forms. Use of shortcuts is never recommended and this stuff, despite millions of dollars worth of marketing, can be nasty for sustainable organic gardening.

<from Rodale>