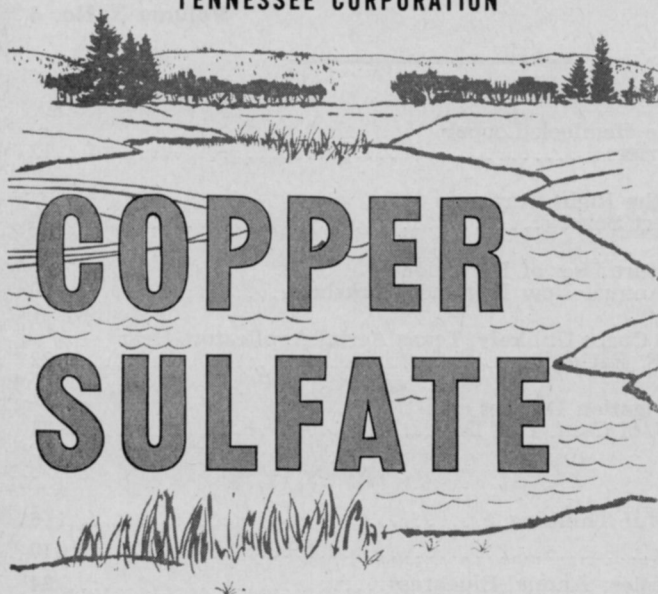




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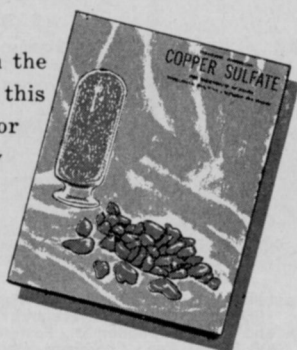


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Wishful Thinking

California health department officials are considering the possibility of requiring licenses from home gardeners before these do-it-yourselfers can apply pesticides, it was reported recently in the public and trade press.

This radical concept represents a culmination of the now-famous pesticide controversy which began nearly two years ago, a controversy marked by frenzy from the start.

Licensing of private citizens as a protective measure is not new. Obviously, automobile drivers licenses are based on the same protective premise. Poison registers in pharmacies keep track of certain drugs and chemicals; licenses are required for hunters, and permits for the right to carry weapons. But if California legislators are in fact serious about licensing home gardeners, we must advocate an extremely cautious study of the possibility.

Reason for the licensing, it is alleged, is that the average homeowner is completely unqualified to deal with toxic compounds; he doesn't understand the chemical structure, means of application, or residual nature; and he probably doesn't read the label.

But we must disagree that such licensing would solve very many problems. Drivers licenses don't stop highway slaughter, and pesticide licenses for private citizens won't stop home accidents. This whole notion is a kind of wishful thinking, that the simple issuance of a home gardeners permit will keep poisons away from children, avoid misapplication, or solve any other tendencies towards misuse.

It would perhaps be better to study the possibility of closer attention to the sale of certain more toxic compounds directly to homeowners. It might even help to investigate distribution patterns of consumer packages, with the possibility of keeping sales of such products in outlets which are managed by people who understand pesticides, their benefits, and their hazards when misapplied.

Another approach is to step up information service to consumers so they understand the real nature of lawn and garden pesticides. Thus they can perform certain simple jobs themselves, and call in the skilled professional applicator for regular service involving weedkillers and insecticides.

Professional applicators already know what they're doing, and, in most cases, they're also *already licensed*.

WEEDS AND TURF is the national monthly magazine of urban/ industrial vegetation maintenance, including turf management, weed and brush control, and tree care. Readers include "contract applicators," arborists, nurserymen, and supervisory personnel with highway departments, railways, utilities, golf courses, and similar areas where vegetation must be enhanced or controlled. While the editors welcome contributions by qualified freelance writers, unsolicited manuscripts, unaccompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes, cannot be returned.