

Dublin City Council Herbicide Use Policy

Glyphosate has been one of the most commonly used herbicide worldwide for several decades and as recently as 12th December 2017, the European Commission made the decision to renew the approval for the use of glyphosate for five more years.

Dublin City Council is conscious however of the need to reduce, replace, and where possible eliminate the use of herbicides and particularly glyphosate due to the potential risk to the environment and human health as highlighted by the World Health Organisation (2015 Report on Evaluation of organophosphate herbicides).

Dublin City Council is also conscious of the widely held desire amongst the public to maintain a 'tidy' appearance in estates, neighbourhoods and along roads which traditionally has meant the widespread application of herbicides to eliminate the perception of untidiness which is created by the growth of weeds. Weed growth does not pose a hazard to the public, and herbicides are being used for aesthetic reasons.

Dublin City Council's policy with regards to herbicide use is to eliminate the use of herbicides by implementing alternative control methods, or where appropriate, allowing weeds to grow.

Alternative control methods to herbicides such as hot water, foam stream, flame weeding and concentrated vinegar are currently being trialled in Dublin to replace the use of herbicides. These alternative trials have eliminated weeds, however the degree of success heretofore achieved with one application of herbicide will probably require up to three or more applications annually of the alternative method. During the period 2018-2020, appropriate methods, or a combination of methods, will be trialled by departments within Dublin City Council to replace herbicide use.

It is unlikely that the alternative control methods being assessed will be as economical as the existing use of herbicides and this will be a consideration in the preparation of future operational budgets.

It is also possible in the future, that it will not be feasible for local authorities to deliver the number of maintenance visits required to eliminate all weed growth and achieve a 'herbicide free city' and so a tolerance of weeds may become more normal.

The physical removal of weeds by hand or using tools is also an important means of weed control and it is Dublin City Council policy to facilitate residents/community groups through tidy towns and similar community initiatives to having local clean-up events which do include the physical removal of weed growth which the local community deems unsightly. The judging and evaluation of the Tidy Towns and Tidy Districts Awards is increasingly informed by the need to reduce and minimise the use of herbicides, to protect bees and other insects, and to promote pollinator friendly areas.

Dublin City Council's policy with regards to queries, complaints or requests for weed control by members of the public should not be to revert automatically to herbicide application but to encourage residents, communities and business groups to manage weeds in their area as part of their contribution to the 'Tidy Towns' and/or the 'All-Ireland Pollinator Plan'

This will include the supply and collection of blue bags to dispose of green waste which is arranged through the local Public Domain Officer.

It is important to note that this herbicide policy will not apply to the management of Invasive Species where chemical control is the most appropriate control option.