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# Organic Growers School



Providing Organic Education Since 1993

## Ask Ruth: Protecting Your Organic Garden from Pesticide Drift



**Dear Ruth,**

I want to grow a small garden, but I live right by a farm where a farmer sprays pesticide. I worry about killing plants and eating the pesticide. What do I do?

Ellen F.

**Dear Ellen,**

Tricky question! My old vegetable garden in North Asheville was separated from my neighbor's vegetable garden by a very thin line – a chain link fence which offered zero protection from pesticides. I think this neighbor gardened organically, but *his* neighbor frustratingly sprayed pesticides that I could detect in the air. It is frustrating to find that your tiny patch of earth is vulnerable to a neighbor's pesticide applications.

You can't dictate your neighbor's agricultural practices, but you can take steps to buffer your garden and property from pesticide drift. Here are a few ideas:

**Plant a wide buffer zone.** Assuming you have enough space to plant – plant trees, shrubs, and perennials that will act as a buffer zone and capture or divert pesticide drift before it reaches your garden. Position your plants in a zigzag formation to maximize their ability to slow down any pesticides coming your way. You can also plant tall, fast-growing annuals and vines. In my old vegetable garden, I didn't have room to plant a wide buffer zone, but I could have planted some sacrificial beans on the fence line. The beans would quickly grow into a curtain of protective vegetation. When planning, consider the mature height of any plants slated for your buffer zone. Don't let the buffer zone block sunshine from your garden.

**Consider a barrier.** If financial resources allow, you could build a board fence between the farm field and your garden. Ideally, the fence would divert the



pesticides. The fence would need to be at least six feet tall to be effective. Allow room for airflow around your garden plants to prevent disease issues...

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## We Have a New Office Space!

We've recently expanded and redesigned our offices! To accommodate our growing team we've been restructuring our workspace to better suit our needs. Take a look!

We are seeking some items to complete the space. If you have any of the below items and would like to donate them to Organic Growers School we would all appreciate it (not to mention that donations are tax deductible). Email [ella@organicgrowersschool.org](mailto:ella@organicgrowersschool.org)

- 5 Desk Chairs: compact, on wheels, ideally ergonomic (saddle, kneeling), yoga ball
- Tables: Either 4 3x2 ft OR 2 3x2 ft, and 1 6x2 ft
- Standing desk toppers
- Curtain rod
- A coat rack for back of a door
- Wireless printer/scanner
- Electric Tea Kettle
- Lamps
- White board paint
- Mic/PA System



We love our Growth Partners!



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