

HOW TICK SAFE IS YOUR BACK YARD?

Concerned about ticks and Lyme disease? You can reduce the number of deer ticks (*Ixodes scapularis*) near your home by the way you landscape and maintain your property. Studies show that tick numbers can be cut by 50 percent or more by making simple landscaping changes. Every home can benefit, although results do vary from year to year, and from property to property.

Target ticks where they live

Deer ticks live in the woods, sustained by the higher humidity levels of the forest. Ticks do not fly, jump or drop from above. The tiny nymphal deer tick, believed to be responsible for up to 90 percent of the transmission of Lyme disease to humans, makes its home in the leaf litter that accumulates on the forest floor, around stone walls and under groundcovers. Nearly 70 percent of ticks on residential lawns are found within nine feet of the forest's edge. Ticks dry up (desiccate) in the sun, and are usually not found in sunny areas on the lawn.



Reduce tick numbers on your property by making simple landscape modifications.

Install a barrier

Create a woodchip, mulch or gravel barrier where your lawn meets the woods to mark the edge of your *tick safe zone*. The dry barrier makes it more difficult for the ticks to migrate from the woods to your lawn. It also serves as a visible reminder that you are leaving your *tick safe zone*, and entering the tick zone. Your barrier should be at least three feet wide. Use a product that can be kept dry, such as treated woodchips. Maintain the barrier each year.

Don't attract wildlife

Deer ticks feed on many small animals, including mice and birds. These animals are responsible for infecting the deer tick with the Lyme disease spirochete. Discourage wildlife from entering your *tick safe zone* by reducing

their habitat and food sources. Seal cracks in foundations, and screen areas under porches and decks. Place woodpiles far from the house. Locate bird feeders outside of your *tick safe zone*. Consider suspending bird feeding in the spring and summer, when nymphal ticks are most active.

Keep stone walls neat

Stone walls that are not well maintained provide shelter for mice and small mammals that carry deer ticks. Seal stone walls or place rocks together tightly to reduce habitat for small mammals. Clear away brush, leaf litter, fallen trees and rocks each year.



Clear away brush and debris, and place stones tightly together.

Analyze your property and how you use it

- ✓ Is your home surrounded by woods?
- ✓ Is your yard more woods than lawn?
- ✓ Does the tree canopy from the woods extend over your yard, driveway or walkways?
- ✓ Do you or does your family use areas of your yard that are in or next to the woods?
- ✓ Are children's swing sets or play areas located close to the woods?
- ✓ Is your mailbox next to a wooded area or stone wall?
- ✓ Do you use pachysandra or other groundcovers near your home, walkway or play areas?
- ✓ Are bird feeders located close to your home or play areas?
- ✓ Do you have an unkempt stone wall?
- ✓ Is your firewood pile located adjacent to your home?
- ✓ Are deer and other wildlife eating your flowers, trees and shrubs?

Creating your tick safe zone

Let the sun shine in and reduce tick habitat. Locate mailboxes, sheds, picnic tables, recreational areas, children's swing sets and play areas in the sun and away from the woods. Trim tree branches and clear away brush, weeds and leaf litter from walkways near wooded or shady areas. Restrict the use of groundcover, such as pachysandra, to areas of the yard that are not used. Consider using woodchips or gravel in shady areas in your safe zone. Keep your grass cut as short as possible.

Focus on the zone edge

Most ticks on lawns are found in the transition area where the lawn meets the woods. This area is the outer perimeter of your *tick safe zone*. To make the edge area less hospitable to ticks, increase light and reduce dampness. Thin tree branches that hang over the lawn to let in light. Clear out low brush, vines, and leaf litter each year. Keep weeds cut as low as possible. A clearly defined, well-manicured border with the woods provides less tick habitat, and less opportunity for contact between people and ticks.



Use deer resistant plantings

Deer are a critical component of the deer tick's reproductive cycle. Don't attract deer to your tick safe zone by planting flowers, shrubs or trees they like to eat. Although no plant is completely resistant from deer damage, some plants are more susceptible than others. For more information about deer resistant plantings, check with your local garden center or nursery.

How about deer fencing? Studies show that deer fencing does not significantly reduce tick numbers unless the deer are fenced out of an area of 15 to 18 acres or more. Ticks travel through the fence on small animals, like mice and birds. Don't rely on deer fencing alone to control ticks in your safe zone. If you use deer fencing, be sure to continue to follow the *tick safe zone* principles to protect your backyard.

Least toxic pesticides

Research shows that pesticides are a reliable and effective way to reduce ticks, particularly when combined with *tick safe zone* principles. A single application of a low-toxicity pesticide around the edge of

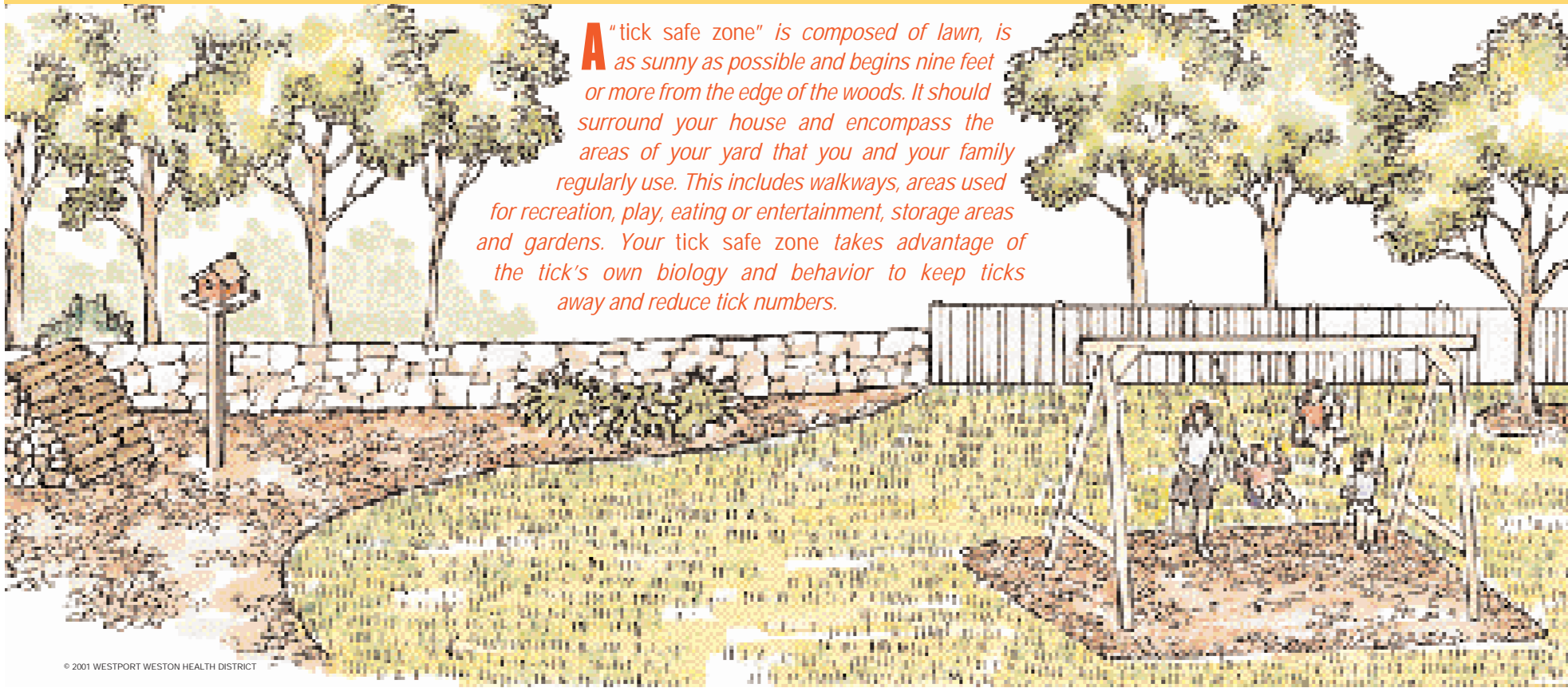


your *tick safe zone* in mid-May or early June can reduce nymphal tick numbers by 80 to 90 percent. If necessary, a fall application can be used to reduce adult ticks. One exception: Some organic pesticides break down quickly and may require multiple applications.

If you choose to use pesticides, select the least toxic product. Consider an organic or synthetic product in the chemical class called *pyrethrums*. In this group, pyrethrins are natural toxins produced from certain chrysanthemum flowers and pyrethroids are synthetic derivatives. Pyrethroids tend to be more effective. Remember to follow directions and use pesticides sparingly. No pesticide is 100% safe.

DON'T FORGET: THE BEST PROTECTION AGAINST LYME DISEASE IS STILL A DAILY TICK CHECK!

WHAT IS A "TICK SAFE ZONE?"



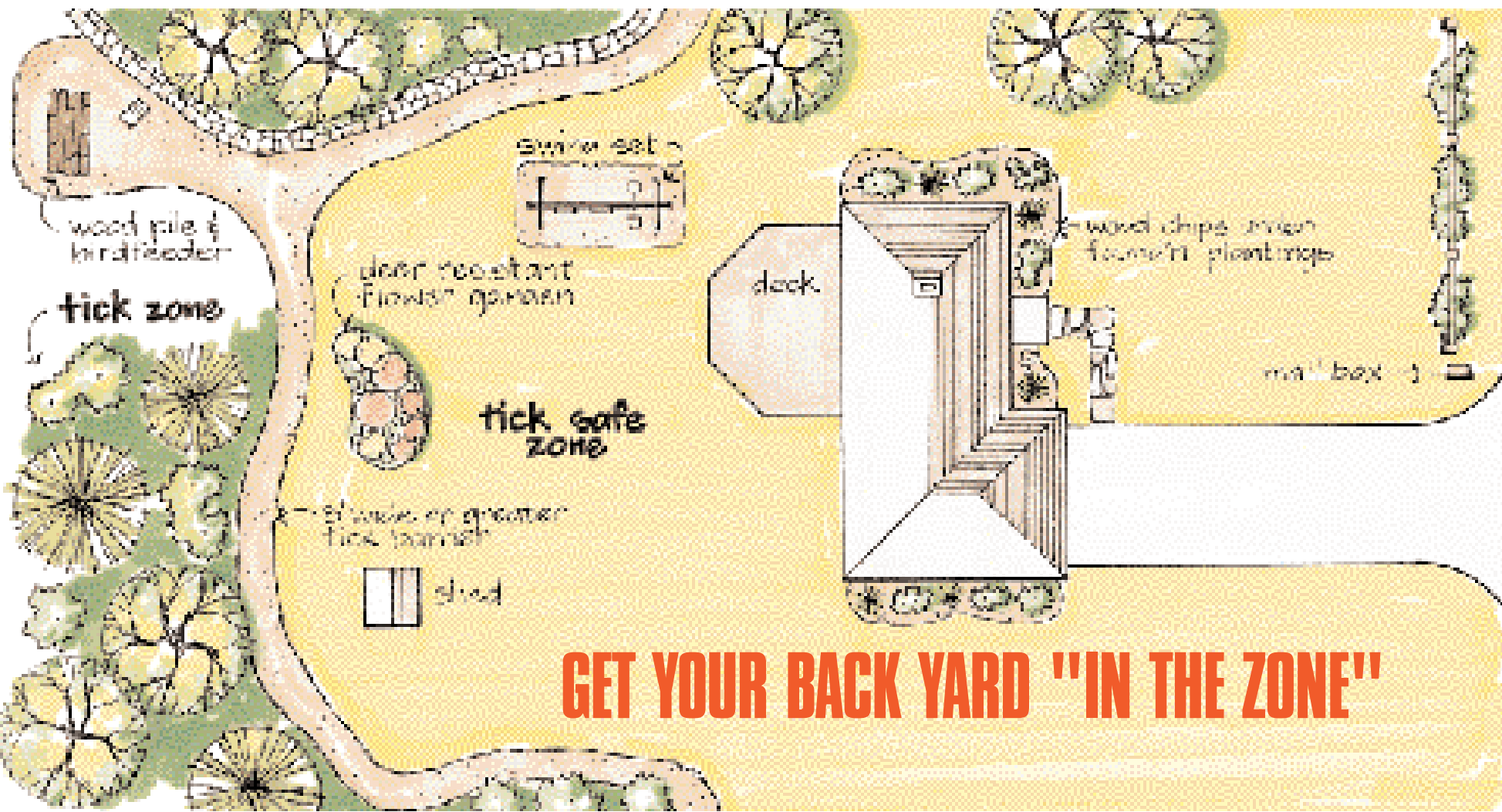
A "tick safe zone" is composed of lawn, is as sunny as possible and begins nine feet or more from the edge of the woods. It should surround your house and encompass the areas of your yard that you and your family regularly use. This includes walkways, areas used for recreation, play, eating or entertainment, storage areas and gardens. Your tick safe zone takes advantage of the tick's own biology and behavior to keep ticks away and reduce tick numbers.

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GET TICKED OFF...TAKE CONTROL OVER TICKS.



GET YOUR BACK YARD "IN THE ZONE"