

# Yard Work and Gardening Activities

## What To Do If You Are Working In Your Yard and Encounter Soil That Contains Vermiculite or Asbestos

### Vermiculite In Libby & Troy

For several decades, vermiculite was commonly used in and around homes in Lincoln County for a variety of applications, including as a soil additive, construction aggregate, and attic insulation. If vermiculite is present, it might contain Libby Amphibole asbestos (LA).

Exposure to LA could lead to serious diseases such as asbestosis, lung cancer, and mesothelioma. It is not possible to remove (or to even know about) *all* the vermiculite in the area.

It is possible that you might unexpectedly find vermiculite after starting your yard work or gardening activities. If you do, you are strongly encouraged to not disturb it further and cause the LA to become airborne.

### Precautionary Steps To Take While Working In Your Yard

#### The Do's:

1. **Do** water often. A healthy lawn reduces dust and contact with bare soil.
2. **Do** mow your lawn or roto-till your garden when it's damp—not when it's dry or dusty.
3. **Do** rinse off any rental equipment within your work area before returning the equipment.
4. **Do** rinse off gardening tools outside within your work area after every use.
5. **Do** wipe your feet and/or take your shoes off at the door and leave them outside, if possible.
6. **Do** wash your hands outdoors after any yard work, if possible.
7. **Do** call the **Lincoln County Asbestos Resource Program (ARP)** at no cost to you if you see ANY vermiculite on your property, even if you are unsure. While waiting for ARP to arrive, take precautions to not disturb the area.



Libby Amphibole asbestos with vermiculite ore in raw form

#### The Don'ts:

1. **Don't** disturb areas where you can see vermiculite. If it's a place you intend to work in, cover the vermiculite and call **ARP**.
2. **Don't** dig, cultivate, mow, rake or roto-till your yard or garden when it's dry and dusty.
3. **Don't** bring dusty or dirty things inside.

Un-exfoliated



Exfoliated



The photo on the left is an example of raw vermiculite in soils. When heated, vermiculite exfoliates (or pops), forming a lightweight material ideal for packing, insulation, and as a soil additive as shown in the photo on the right.



**Lincoln County Asbestos Resource Program (ARP)**  
**(406) 291-5335**

**For more information visit: [lcarp.org](http://lcarp.org)**

# Libby Asbestos is Toxic

It should be avoided or handled with extreme care. Exposure to Libby Amphibole asbestos has resulted in disease in workers and non-workers who have had contact with contaminated materials. Take care not to bring any contaminated clothing or material back to your home or business. Treat any asbestos containing material as regulated material and comply with all state and local regulations. The health risk from exposure to all asbestos depends greatly on the amount of asbestos in the material you are disturbing and how long the exposure lasts. **There is no known threshold risk level for asbestos-related materials, and any exposure will increase the risk of asbestos-related disease.**

*If you take the basic precautions outlined in this fact sheet, your risk from exposure will be less.*

## Common dust or surgical masks are not effective against asbestos fibers!



**Wearing a respirator mask with a P-100 fine particulate HEPA filter is the best way to avoid breathing asbestos fibers. However, they must be used properly or exposure may still occur.**

For more information on respirator requirements, visit OSHA's website:  
[www.osha.gov/respiratory-protection](http://www.osha.gov/respiratory-protection)

Learn about the risks of asbestos exposure and basic precautions by reviewing the Best Management Practices (BMP) resource fact sheets available at the **Lincoln County Asbestos Resource Program** or on the website: **lcarp.org**

- **Reducing Asbestos Exposure** – *How to reduce exposure to asbestos when renovating or excavating*
- **Lincoln County Do-It-Yourselfers** – *What to do if you find vermiculite or asbestos*
- **Contractors & Tradesmen Working Outdoors** – *What to do if you find vermiculite or asbestos*
- **Demolition Activities** – *Precautionary steps to take before tearing down structures*
- **Libby and Troy Residents** – *Vermiculite or Asbestos in or around your home or business*
- **Contractors & Tradesmen Working Indoors** – *What to do if you find vermiculite or asbestos*
- **13 Simple Steps to Protect from Libby Asbestos** – *How to reduce exposure to asbestos*

## Who Can I Contact With Questions About Asbestos?



**ARP  
HOTLINE  
(406) 291-5335**



**Montana  
Asbestos Control  
Program  
(406) 444-5300**

The DEQ or ARP might send personnel out to inspect a situation involving vermiculite or LA. That guidance might include advising the owner to allow a licensed asbestos contractor or inspector to take samples, conduct cleanup, or take other special measures to reduce the risk of asbestos exposure. A list of licensed contractors and inspectors can be provided by contacting DEQ or ARP.

Montana law requires that employers hire a licensed inspector to determine if asbestos is present before doing any work. Asbestos that is not associated with the Libby vermiculite mine is still regulated by the Montana DEQ. If non-Libby asbestos is found, it should be dealt with according to Montana regulations. Explore Montana DEQ's Asbestos web site at: [www.deq.mt.gov/Asbestos](http://www.deq.mt.gov/Asbestos)