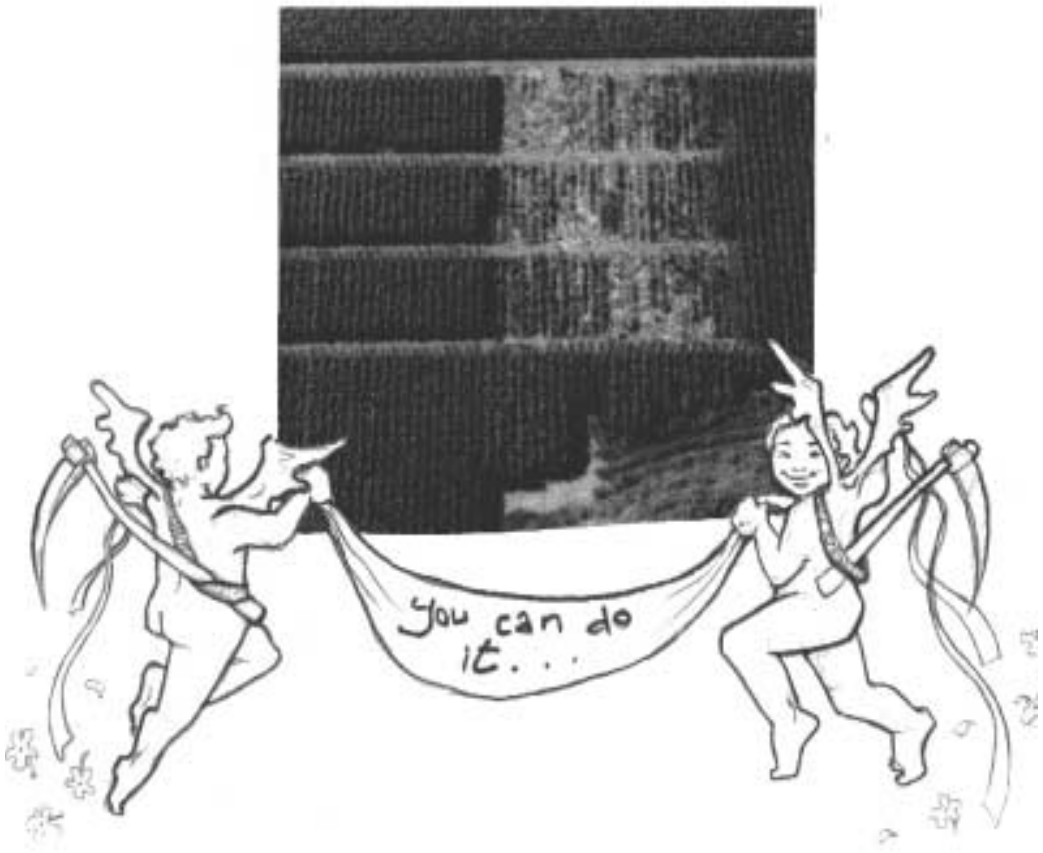
"everything you ever wanted to know about responsible covert actions but were afraid to ask"
Justin Time



originally printed on treefree hemp paper

my first little book of

GM Crop Decontamination

Trees

GM poplar and apple trees have been destroyed.

1. Lopping Young trees with slim trunks can be dispatched with a pair of loppers (get the ones with extending handles). Nice and quick, about 10 seconds per tree, but takes some strength.

2. Sawing This is relatively straightforward if the tree is young, but is noisy. Use a sharp and oiled saw blade. If it is small enough, grip the tree with your free hand above where you're cutting and ease it quietly to the ground. If the trees are larger, make sure you know how to fell trees properly, otherwise you may injure yourself or someone else, or get your saw irretrievably jammed.

3. Ring-barking This effectively chokes the tree's 'circulation'. You will need to remove a single strip of bark several inches wide, from around the circumference of the tree. Use a chisel with a half inch wide blade and allow about 30 seconds per tree.

Machinery

Mechanical means have been used only once, by Greenpeace activists at Lyng in Norfolk. Tractors, pulling mowers, rollers or ploughs, suggest considerable potential (fast) and problems (noisy, logistically difficult and traceable), but you'll have to work out the details yourselves if you want to go down this route.

The Future

There are a limited variety of GM crops being tested in this country at present. There may very well be more on the way. With the experience you've gained from your activities with oilseed rape, etc., you will be able to adapt to other crops if and when they come along, and pass your knowledge onto others.

The campaign against GM has made unimaginable strides, against all odds. So if we all do what we can to work against GM and for sustainable alternatives, there may be no new GM crops, no GM foods, and no threat of a genetically engineered future. It really could happen this way. It's up to us all to make sure it does.

Good luck, and happy gardening… .

Potatoes

There are quite a few different varieties tthat may be tested. The details of growth and appearance may vary, so try the gardening section of the libary or the local agicultural college library. They'll look a bit like fat-leaved straggly tomato plants. Terribly tricky to kill effectively and not spread contamination. Getting them young by pulling up the root with seed potato attached and bagging it up is probably safest, though this is obviously very time consuming and may require a return visit if it's done so early they have a chance to re-plant. Otherwise cut through the roots and scatter the bits in different directions.

Wheat

Wheat is planted in the Spring and Winter, the Winter crop is sown between late September to early October and can be harvested from early January to late April. The Spring stuff goes in in early March and can be harvested between early August and late September. When young it looks like a sort of large leafed grass (see pic), but when the ear of corn finally develops it's easy to distinguish by its solid appearance; grains growing in a sort of braid. It starts out green and ripens to gold. If it is young try pulling it up, otherwise use a 'grass hook' (a sort of crescent-shaped knife).

Barley

The Spring crop is sown Febuary to March and harvested mid May to August. The Winter seeds are planted from September to October and harvested July to August. The young plants look grassy like young wheat. Its 'ear' is fairly similar too, but the grains are more pointed and elongated and taper into a long stiff hair, so that altogether it looks rather tufted. It will start green and ripen to a lighter shade of gold than wheat, but disposal is the same - pull up when young, cut with a grass hook when it is older.

Introduction

This is a booklet about decontaminating GMO trial sites. It is for information and entertainment purposes only. Don't take any action based on the contents of this booklet. Okay? Right then…

Despite overwhelming public opposition to GM, the government has refused to halt the headlong rush towards the commercialisation of genetically engineered crops. Genetic pollution is spread by normal reproduction, and cannot ever be recalled once released. Therefore, in order to prevent the release of uncontrollable genetic pollution throughout the countryside, there is no option but to decontaminate the GM deliberate release trial sites in progress across the land.

Obviously, crop actions are a last resort. But in the absence of any responsible behaviour on the part of industry or government, they also play a vital role in safeguarding our future.

Anyone can take the responsible step of decontaminating a trial site. It is an activity suitable for people of all ages, shapes, sizes and backgrounds. You may or may not have thought of yourself as the sort of person who would take direct action of this kind, but it is up to all of us equally to act. Taking such action has its stresses, but it can also be empowering and liberating, as well as very effective.

This booklet aims to give a fairly comprehensive overview of how to go about doing a GM crop action, and is based on experience.

The whole business is basically simple and straightforward, and much of what is involved quickly becomes second nature. If you find yourself daunted by the weight of information below, though, don't panic. This booklet may help save you time, based as it is on other people's experiences (and mistakes). But take from it what you need, you will find the way that works best for you.

It is also possible to do an action with less preparation than outlined in this booklet and be successful; it is up to you how thoroughly you want to approach it.

None of the organisations mentioned in this booklet have had anything to do with its writing. They are simply sources of information.

A GM action may be open and accountable (overt), or done in such a way as to avoid detection (covert). It is up to you.

An open action obviously involves less skulking about all round. You might inform the media, and even the police and landowner, in advance. Alternatively, you might just do the action and wait to be discovered, or bag up some of the crop and return it to the biotech corporation responsible, to get noticed.

The advantage of open or accountable actions is that you can hold your head up high, gain publicity for your cause, and justify your actions publicly. Equally, you will probably be arrested, and possibly face charges and prosecution.

A disadvantage of the open action is that you may not have the time to fully decontaminate your site. A middle way is the covert-to-overt action, begun quietly in the dark and completed openly after dawn. This is a particularly useful idea on larger sites such as farm-scale trials.

Covert actions are just about getting rid of the stuff, preventing pollination and contamination, whilst avoiding the attentions of the authorities. That way you stay free to continue doing actions. The media show little interest in successful covert actions. There are no names, faces, photos or interviews to whet their appetites.

Weigh it up and decide which type of action you want to do, depending on your priorities, principles or situation. Ask the question, "what are we trying achieve in this action?" early on in the process.

Without any prejudice toward either method, this booklet describes the process of going about covert actions, as information on these is hard to come by. Much of the information contained may also be useful for an open action, and more helpful tips for open actions can be found in the Genetix Snowball Handbook for Action (contact Genetix Snowball, Box 13, Peace and Environment Centre, 43 Gardner Street, Brighton, BN1 1UN. www.gn.apc.org/pmhp/gs).

Before you commit yourself to decontaminating a site, it is worth finding out whether there is any sort of campaign against the trial in the area. GM trial sites are an ideal focus for a local campaign, and farmers have often been persuaded to voluntarily withdraw from trials before planting, or to plough up the test crops on their land in response to local opposition. Make contact with the campaign if there is one. They might be planning a large public 'picnic' on the crop, or some such action, and you don't want to tread on anyone's toes. If there is no campaign and the site is local to you, start one. Put up some posters; organise a public meeting and a petition; contact the media; try talking to the farmer. You might decide to leave an action as a last resort, just before pollination, to give a chance for local action and awareness raising to have an effect, before wading in.

Sugar/fodder Beet

Beet is usually sown in March (earlier sowing may begin in seed beds in February, for transplantation in March or April). It is harvested between late September and November.

It has a whitish, conical root that produces a lot of stems, each with a single irregular green and lobed leaf as well as a garland of flowers.

For beet you will need spades, preferably sharpened. The quickest way is to slice through the beets as they sit in the ground. Cut off the top third of the root part of the beet, along with the leaves to which it is attached, then scatter it away from what's left in the ground.

With practice you can slice through 2 or 3 beets with a single swing of the spade. But be careful to cut through the body of the beet. If you only cut off the green leafy part, it will reshoot and the plant continue to grow. If you pull up the whole beet and leave it intact it can be popped back in the ground by the farmer. If you leave the severed tops of the beets where they were cut, the heads could be put back on the bodies and a percentage may take.

Maize (Corn)

Maize is usually sown in late March to early April. It flowers typically in late July, and is harvested in September.

It has a single main stem with irregular long thin drooping leaves. The male flowers form distinctive reddish-brown tassles, and it produces a large yellow corn cob.

Maize is the quickest and easiest crop to decontaminate. The work is a little noisier than oilseed rape. Maize can grow to 8 feet or more in height, and may typically be 5 or 6 feet high, which obstructs visibility - you may not see trouble coming. On the other hand, it's easy to hide in.

1. Snapping

Highly recommended when the crop is high. Corn stalks are brittle and snap off easily. You can 'reap' several plants at a time by sweeping your arm low along a row, with your other arm held above, bracing against the plants to force them to snap. Or kick them over. Or whatever.

2. Cutting

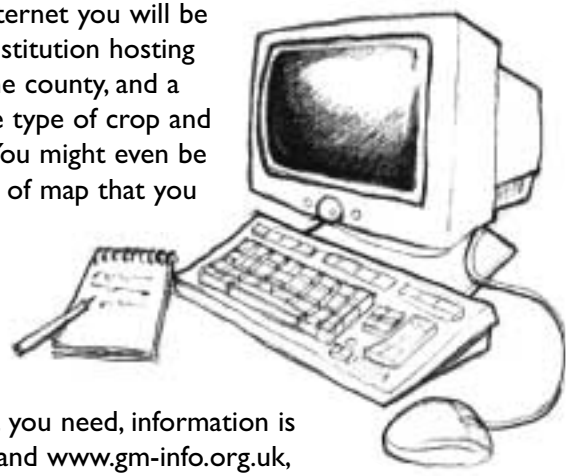
See notes on cutting tools. Quick, but particularly dangerous as you may not be able to see each other above the plants. Not recommended when the crop is above shoulder height.

3. Pulling

The plants will come up with a little effort and, as they are planted relatively widely apart, you can make some progress this way. But unless you're planning to try and remove the plants from the site afterwards, there's not too much point.

Finding Your Site: 1) the paperwork

The easiest source of information is the internet. If you are not online, most local libraries provide free web access and instruction, and you can print off and take away any information you need. From the internet you will be able to find the name of the farm or institution hosting the trial, the nearest village or town, the county, and a six-figure grid reference, along with the type of crop and a rough guide to the size of the trial. You might even be able to find the map number and type of map that you will need to find the site.



At the time of writing, the best at-a-glance list of GM trial sites can be found at www.geneticsaction.org/testsites. So try here first. If you can't find what you need, information is also available at www.primalseeds.org, and www.gm-info.org.uk, although these might not be up to date (look for date of last updating on the web page). The Friends of the Earth website has a list of farm-scale trial locations only: www.foe.org.uk, and click on Real Food campaign.

In case you're still having problems, the locations of farm-scale trials can be found at www.detr.gov.uk/fse/location/indexd.htm, and a list of the whereabouts of national seed list trials is available at www.maff.gov.uk/planth/pvs/natlist.htm. These are both government websites.

The Dept of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) website, at www.detr.gov.uk/acre, contains other information that you might want to look at. In particular, there is an index to the GMO Public Register. If you locate your site in the index you can then ring the Biotechnology Unit of DETR, on 020 7944 3409, and they will send you the full entry for that particular site, which will contain further information.

Once all that is out of the way, get hold of the appropriate Ordnance Survey 1:25 000 map. This will either be a 'Pathfinder', 'Explorer' or 'Outdoor Leisure' map, depending where you are in the country. An OS 'mapping index' (free from map shops) will help you identify which one to get. You might also consider buying the Philips 'Navigator' road map. This is quite expensive but is the best road map available. It contains far more detailed information than other road maps, such as farm names, tracks, small woods and, most crucially, grid references.

Finding Your Site: 2) the groundwork

Now for the 'recce' (an abbreviation of the word reconnaissance) - the site visit to find the trial. Take your waxed jacket, bird book and binoculars and head for the fields, or take a dog out for a walk in the countryside. In the absence of a dog, take a dog lead - a lost dog can be a useful explanation for why you are off the beaten footpath. Dress 'country casual'. It is worth making the effort to look the part properly. Wear walking boots or wellies, not 'para' boots or trainers. Look smart. If you're looking basically scruffy, you'll still look scruffy even wearing a Barbour jacket.

Go in a pair. This way you can compare notes, get a second opinion, keep each other's spirits up, and you're less likely to delude yourself that you've found the site when you haven't. Happy couples out for a stroll look particularly innocuous. But don't go in groups of more than two or you may draw attention to yourselves.

Give yourself plenty of time to find the site - you may well need all day or even longer.

Your recce will include: a) location, size and nature of the trial site on the ground, b) safe routes into and away from the area by vehicle, c) suitable park-up/drop-off spots, d) routes from the vehicle to the crop and back again.

Taking a compass with you will assist navigation in unfamiliar territory. GPS electronic navigators (£100-£150) are often also used , and can help ensure precise location. Remember to learn and practice the 'clear memory' function if you get one.

Try and keep the number of visits to the area to a minimum, to avoid attracting attention. That said, it is a good idea for at least one person from each group or vehicle-full to have done a site visit, and if it is a small-group action it might be possible for everyone to have been for a recce beforehand.

Step hard so that you snap or crush enough of the stems, otherwise some may later spring back up and continue growing.

This is a fast method, the least tiring, and the relatively upright posture gives you good awareness of your surroundings. The materials are cheap, and can be dumped if necessary and easily replaced.
Dismantled, they don't look much like a tool in any case.

d) The broom handle method.
Hold the broom handle horizontally in front of you with both hands, shuffle forwards in a kneeling position, leaning forward to crush the stems against the ground every foot or so. Quick and effective on crops which are tall and brittle enough, but can be tough on your knees.

2. Cutting

The crop certainly won't recover from this treatment, but see notes on cutting tools. A good compromise might be the other broom handle method. Swing your long pole in a wide arc, battering the stuff into submission. Although a bit noisy, this is very theraputic and probably more dependable than crushing, but take care not to clobber your companions.

1. Crushing

When the plants are fully grown they can be killed by bending over and breaking the stems near the ground. This can be done by:

a) Getting on the ground and rolling about on the crop, flattening it with your body. This is a tiring and soggy method, but crucially it involves no tools. You will soon develop your own personal style of floundering and belly flopping. Oilseed rape forms a dense mass and rolling is harder work than it may sound. It can also be very disorientating. It is easy to get carried away, make a snail trail through the crop away from your friends, and end up dizzy, confused and lost. So try to work fairly close together, keep aware of what's going on around you, and look out for each other.

b) The shuffle-crush method; a sort of low level harvesting. Kneel down and move sideways crab fashion, breaking handfuls of the stems in front of you. Relatively slow but fairly effective and discreet

c) The hoax crop circle. Drill holes at either end of a metre or so of plank. Take two generous lengths of rope, thread them through the holes, and knot to secure them.

To use, hold the ropes tightly in each hand, and with one foot on top of the wood, 'step' it firmly down onto the rape. Then lift it with the ropes and step forward onto the next rank of plants.

Take notes as you go, in case you forget what you think you'll remember, and so that you can pass the information on accurately. Note helpful landmarks such as particular trees, pylons and buildings. You may find it useful to take photos, to show to others who won't see the site before the action, or to aid your memory. Remember though that taking photos may look like pretty suspicious behaviour. Destroy the photos and negatives before the action.

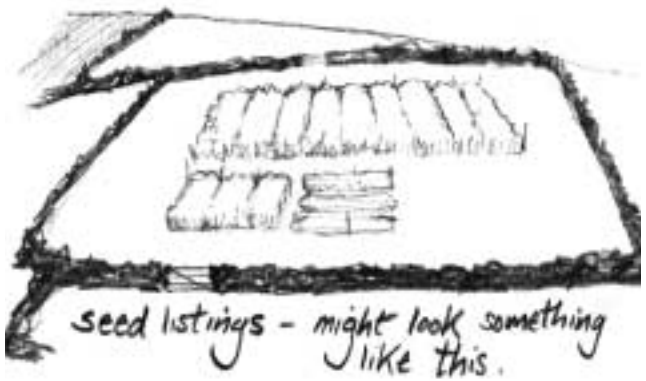
The grid reference may direct you right to the trial crop. However, it may just pinpoint the farmhouse or nearest farm building, which may be some distance away, in which case you'll need to use your powers of observation and judgement to find the trial itself.

If this is the case, drive round first, get the lie of the land, and scrutinise the fields and crops as you pass - you'll be amazed how fascinated you can become in the appearance of arable crops at various stages of development. Find a high vantage point - climb a tree or find a hill. If you're lucky and they're being responsible, it may be the only crop of its type in the area - a patch of oilseed rape in a sea of winter wheat, or whatever. Otherwise, check out every crop of its type in the vicinity. You may well have to quarter the area on foot. Stick to footpaths where possible, and follow field boundaries as much as you can, to avoid the attentions of irate farmers. Take with you a photocopy of the immediate area, and methodically cross off the 'innocent' fields until, by a process of elimination, you find your site.

If you are struggling to find the crop, don't panic. And don't convince yourself hastily that you've found it, if the truth is you're not quite sure. Take your time. Occasionally a trial site just can't be found, even by experienced site visitors. Such is life. You could return another day and have another search. But don't plump for a site that you're not sure of. Trashing the wrong crop gives the industry and the media a field day, makes you appear as feckless vandals, alienates the public, and is a right royal waste of time and effort.

Take some time to familiarise yourself with the all-round geography of the area. This will be useful, especially if you become lost on foot or in your vehicle, or if you need to change your plans in a hurry. It's good to visit the site at night at least once, as objects and distances can appear very different in the dark.

National Seed List Trials



These are the trials a crop must go through to become a legal and approved commercial seed variety and take its place on the National Seed List.

National Seed List trials vary considerably, from tennis court size to something approaching that of the farm-scale trials (see below). The site will probably consist of several smallish rectangular blocks or strips of the crop (approximate sizes are listed in the GMO Public Register entry for the site), each area separated by a strip of bare earth. The different areas are for different things, and at least one plot will be a control crop, i.e. non-mutant as a comparison. (If a release site is to test for herbicide resistance, the plots with fewest weeds may be the GM plots.) The different areas of the crop are sometimes marked by small numbered signs, though more often just by thin white cane-like rods stuck in the ground. The whole site is usually surrounded by a strip of bare earth, and by a barrier crop (a non-GM 'safety net' usually of the same type as the release crop).

In reality it often doesn't look so clear on the ground. The white canes and bare earth border are fairly reliable indicators, but aren't always apparent, and the barrier crop sometimes does not appear distinct from the trial plots. The best time for an initial visit is when the crop is young and small, as the layout is most apparent at this time. Later on, once the plants have become shaggy and sprawling, it may be more difficult to make out.

Farm-Scale Trials

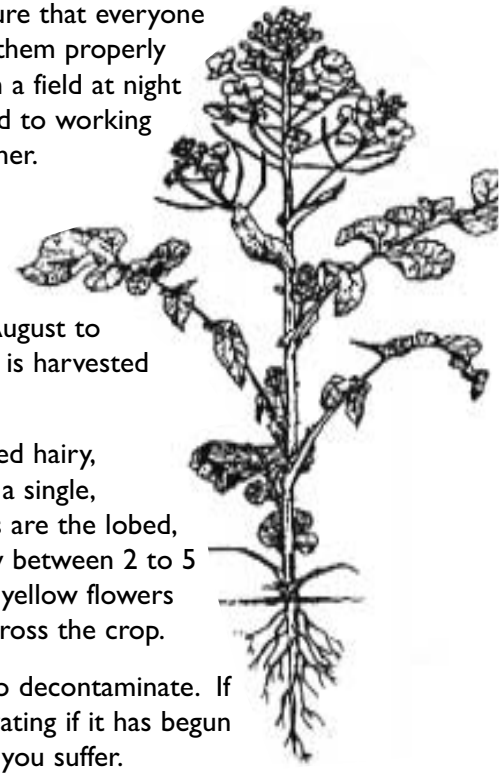
There are two types of farm-scale trials (FSTs). In the paired field design, two neighbouring fields are used, one planted with the mutant crop and the other with a non-GM comparison crop. For the single field design one large field will be split between mutant and non-mutant plants. This is the design that you will be most likely to find. FSTs are very large and vary in size, from 2 to 10 hectares.

Grid references for FSTs tend to be fairly accurate, probably because of their high public profile, so finding the site shouldn't be too difficult. A reliable sign that you've got the right crop is the discovery of upturned, small and shallow, brown plastic plant pots distributed around the margins of the crop. Some of these sit on the ground. Others conceal a white plastic or polystyrene beaker below, sunk into the ground and containing a bright blue liquid. Both are used for collecting invertebrates as

Fingerprints and/or other forensic traces may well be able to link you with the crop even if you are arrested away from the trialsite.
Think carefully before taking hooks, scythes, sickles or slashers to a site.
They'll look pretty peculiar in the boot of your car if you are pulled over by the police. They could potentially be interpreted as an offensive weapon. There is a very real possibility that in the dark, in a confused situation in a dense and perhaps tall crop, you may - perhaps seriously - injure one of your group. You should not use cloth or leather gloves with swinging, cutting tools as they slip on the handles, though the ones with grippy palms and fingers are an option. Going gloveless means you will leave fingerprints all over the place. And if you put your tool down in the field in the dark you might not be able to find it again.

However, blades are useful for cutting oilseed rape and maize when the crops are too young and flexible to be reliably killed by crushing. Scythes, scythettes and slashers are ideal for plants that are at knee to waist height, above that a short handled tool like a sickle or grass hook may be best. Sharp tools can be bought at some garden centres for £12-£25 but cheaper and sturdier instruments can be found at secondhand shops or agricultural auctions.

If you are going to use cutting tools, make sure that everyone agrees to it. Get some experience of using them properly in advance - before you start flailing about in a field at night with your mates - and make sure you're used to working together and that you stay aware of each other.



Oilseed Rape

There are two different kinds of oilseed rape. The winter oilseed rape is sown late August to mid- September. It flowers May to June, and is harvested mid-July to mid-August.

The young plant is low lying with deeply lobed hairy, grass green leaves. As it grows it throws up a single, smooth slender stem, which is blue-green, as are the lobed, smoother upper leaves. The plants can grow between 2 to 5 feet tall, and are planted densely. The bright yellow flowers have four petals, and form a sea of yellow across the crop.

Oilseed rape is probably the quietest crop to decontaminate. If you suffer from hay fever, rape is very aggravating if it has begun to flower, so take something to alleviate it if you suffer.

It is almost always possible to escape if you are focused and determined enough. People have escaped arrest by burying themselves under leaves in the woods, hiding in streams, or just walking all night. Think beforehand about what you might do in the situation, and prepare yourself, so you don't flap as much if it comes to it.

If you are pulled over by the police on your way home, stay calm, and assume they know nothing about what you have been doing. It is very likely to be a random late-night spot check. Think of a simple and plausible story to explain where you've been and where you are going, and preferably leave it to the driver to tell it. If you all start gabbling you may well trip yourselves up. It is a good idea to find a driver who can remain fairly unruffled and natural in such situations.

Crops and Gardening Tips

The main GM crop types for deliberate release in Britain are outlined below. For additional information on crops, try the library of your local agricultural college.

General Notes on Work Methods

Try to work in a methodical and systematic manner, and keep in touch with each other as you work.

Make as much of a mess as you can. Scatter any canes and signs you find as you go. If it looks a chaotic shambles then it is less likely to be considered salvageable.

If you are short of time on an NSL action, try to destroy some of each block of crop, as some of them will be non-GM control crops, and come back for the rest if there's time.

You only need to destroy 50-75% of an NSL trial to invalidate it, although getting the whole test site is preferable. Whatever you achieve, whether you flatten the lot or nibble at the edges, it is great work you do, and sends a clear and powerful message out to the government, the biotech corporations, and the world.

Pace yourselves. It is satisfying but hard work, and two or three hours is a long time to go at it. If you hurl yourself at the job you may be worn out within a few minutes.

A note on tools

Remember when considering whether to use tools that a tool may be used as evidence against you.

part of the trial. You might want to record the whereabouts of these pots so that you can locate and scatter them when the action happens.

Half of the crop will be non-GM, and the other half mutant. To find out which half is which you can take samples and have them genetically tested, though this is expensive and difficult to arrange. However, there is a simpler and cheaper method. The farm-scale trial crops are engineered to be resistant to one of two herbicides: glyphosate, e.g Monsanto's Roundup, and glufosinate ammonium, e.g. Murphy's Weedol or Focus Do It All liquid weedkiller concentrate. Get hold of some of the appropriate herbicide from a garden centre, mix it according to the instructions, and decant it into a household plant sprayer. Take some spare with you in a bottle.

Liberally spray a small area, e.g. one metre square in each of the four corners of the crop.

To make it less obvious, and to avoid any barrier crop, take 20 or 30 paces along the field boundary from the corner, and then another 20 or 30 paces into the crop. Count and record your paces. Walk from a recognisable tree, bush or other feature into the crop, and walk towards a landmark feature. Record these details so that you will be able to retrace your steps and find your test patch again. Leave some inconspicuous indicator at each test patch, such as a short stick stuck in the ground, to help you find the site again when you return. (Note: maize leaves need to be out before spraying with glufosinate or the spray will not work. So don't test when too young.)

Go back a week or two later and you should find that two of the four patches are yellowed and wilting, whilst the other two down the mutant end are unaffected.

Legalities

GM crop actions are obviously activities that take place at the edge of the law. Therefore there are risks involved. However, there are good reasons to be positive.

There is no reason why, if you are careful, you should be discovered or arrested in the first place on a covert action. The incidence of this happening has been extremely low.

In the case of arrests, there has been a marked disinclination on the part of the police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to take matters further. In some cases activists have been arrested and later released without charge - even when openly

decontaminating a site. In other cases, charges have been brought but later dropped without going to court.

The charge you are most likely to face will be criminal damage. In 2000, Greenpeace activists charged with criminal damage for destroying a crop of GM maize at Lyng in Norfolk were found not guilty by a jury, having claimed 'lawful excuse' under the legislation. In a similar case in South Devon in 1999, the charges were dropped less than 48 hours before the trial was due to start, and the prosecution accepted that it could not contest the defendants' case.

Their legal success was based on a few factors that may be worth considering.

a) Threat to another's property - you are legally entitled to take action to prevent the contamination of a neighbour's crops if cross pollination would cause them financial loss. This could potentially apply to any conventional crop, asthere is now a premium on all non-GM crops. However, any organic farm within a 6 mile radius of a GM test site stands to lose its Soil Association organic standard, so the demonstrable threat to these farms is particularly readily provable.

b) Honesty of belief - you need to prove that you believed there was a threat from the crop and that your actions stood a reasonable chance of eliminating it. This can be infuriating if you want to use the opportunity to put GM on trial, because the only issue under question is your certainty, not your reasons for it. To get round that you might consider taking an 'evidence pack' with you on the action, containing publications and issues you may want to raise in court. Handing it over as you get arrested means that it is 'evidence from the scene of the crime' and so you will be able to take it into the dock with you and refer to it. However, you need to agree to do this beforehand with all your group as it immediately removes your option to claim "it wasn't me guv" and could prove a liability if dropped on the field or found in your vehicle going to and from the site.

c) Immediacy - that other routes of prevention had been tried and that the crop was about to pollinate.

The few successful prosecutions brought so far have resulted in fines, or conditional discharges (being bound over to keep the peace). The authorities seem extremely reluctant to take draconian action against GM activists - presumably for fear of the attendant publicity, to avoid making martyrs of anyone, and in recognition of the level of public opinion against GM. In one case in December 2000, five defendants were found guilty at Darlington magistrates' court of criminal damage to a crop of GM

probably a good reason why you made the plans you did in the first place.

In particular, at the end of the action, leave the crop at the time you agreed you were going to leave. You, or some of you, may get lured into thinking that another 15 minutes or 30 minutes on the crop will finish it off properly. But another 30 minutes is unlikely to mean the difference between success and failure. On the other hand, an extra 30 minutes could be disastrous. It might start to get light, you might be discovered…don't take the risk.

On Being Scared, etc…

Most people get nervous or frightened before an action. It is okay to feel tense and jittery in advance. It is a good idea to talk about these feelings within your group before the action, rather than all pretending to be okay. If you talk about it, this helps dissipate the tension, as does the discovery that everyone else is feeling the same way.

After all your preparation it is easy to imagine that everyone knows what you're up to. But to the outside world you are just another car on the road, a few more people among the many on their way to who knows where. For you it is a significant date, but for everyone else it is just another night. There's no more reason to expect a visit from crop-pullers tonight than any other night. They don't know you're coming. Most people in an area won't even know there is a trial site nearby. While you might feel glaringly conspicuous and obvious, that probably isn't the reality. So relax (easy to say, harder to do!). Try and think of yourselves as small, inconspicuous figures in a big, wide landscape.

Emergencies

If someone approaches while you are on the crop, do not assume that they have seen you. They may have seen something, but don't know what. Their eyes may not have adjusted to the dark if they have recently come outside. If they have a torch, remember that this effectively makes them blind to everything outside the torch beam.

So don't start shouting and running around in a panic. You may be able to slip quietly away from the crop and melt away into the night. You may even be able to avoid discovery by lying down.

If for some reason you are surprised by lots of police, then probably your best chance is to scatter on foot in different directions. Try not to lead the police to the vehicles or the drop-off point. If necessary you may have to stay out all night and catch an early morning bus or train.

work. But you will have to be very careful and disciplined if you do. Your fingerprints may be on the bottle, not to mention forensic traces. Arrange a fixed point to put the water, next to the crop, and visit it to get a drink. Don't wander around with the bottles.

· Take a colour photocopy of a map of the site and surroundings for each person. (You will need to use an unsupervised copy machine to do this, as copyright limits the reproduction of OS maps. Try a library.)

· Check you've put any tools and equipment you need in the vehicles.

· For each person take some paper money, down your sock or somewhere safe, in case of unforeseen eventualities, and a 20p piece so you can use a phone box in an emergency.

· All of you should memorise, or write somewhere on your body, the phone numbers of your solicitor and your contact person (if these are applicable).

· Take watches (and synchronise them), and a lighter or box of matches in case you want to burn any incriminating bits of paper.

· Take some anti-histamines, or other hay fever treatment, if there any sufferers in your party.

Final Meeting

Have a get together before the action, either before you leave home or somewhere on the way. Leave plenty of time for it. Go over the plans and all the details so that everyone is clear. Make sure you've ironed out any uncertainties and worked through any disagreements.

If everyone knows what they are doing then once you leave the vehicles you will not have to say anything. Stay silent throughout the action unless you really need to communicate something.

It is a good idea to arrange yourselves into 'affinity' groups of four for the night, and within that into pairs, so that you have a 'buddy'. This way you should be able to work more efficiently, look out for each other, and feel safe and supported. In case you lose track of each other it can be useful to arrange a simple, distinctive hand signal to identify your affinity group, one that can be answered in kind by anyone you approach, as it is hard to differentiate between black figures in the dark, and you don't want to be going round asking everyone who they are.

Whatever final plans you make, agree to stick to them, and then really do stick to them, as far as is practical. In the heat of the moment, you may think a change of plan is a bright idea, but you may also not be thinking very clearly and there was

oilseed rape. They were given conditional discharges. The magistrate accepted the 'honesty of motives', and his only criticism was that they had not acted more quickly and decontaminated more trial sites. The prosecution apologised to the defendants, said she would be avoiding GM food in the future, and wished the defendants all the very best.

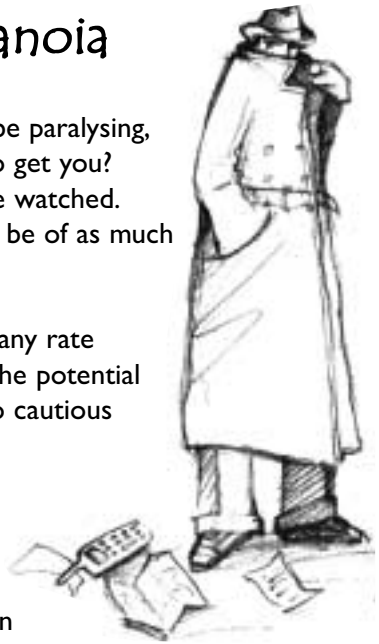
So, there is no reason to be too fearful. Nevertheless, crop actions do bring with them the potential risk of arrest and its consequences. Without getting too preoccupied, it is advisable to consider these possibilities, how you feel about them, and your response to them. Then take all reasonable steps to ensure the instance doesn't arise. Many people have done umpteen crop actions without a single scrape with the law.

This booklet is in no way a comprehensive legal briefing. You may want to get professional legal advice before doing an action, which can be obtained in confidence, and usually free of charge. It is worth asking around and trying to locate a sympathetic solicitor with a good reputation. If you find one, ask them if they can be used as solicitor whilst you are in custody, in the case of arrest. Memorise their phone number for the action, or write it on your arm. Pre-action legal advice and information is also available from the Activists' Legal Advice Project: ring 01865 243772 or e-mail activistslegal@gn.apc.org to get briefings on arrest, court procedure, etc.
If you are arrested, it is often advised that you use a pre-arranged solicitor or do without. Duty solicitors are of very unreliable quality.

Almost invariably it is best to say nothing, from the moment of arrest through to release. You will need to all agree to do so before the action. Ignore or deflect attempts by the police to question or converse with you informally, and give a 'no comment' interview. Most people who are convicted, convict themselves through their confessions or indiscretions whilst in custody. Don't make up a story, especially if more than one of you has been arrested. The police are experienced interrogators and can spot inaccuracies and conflicting statements a mile off, so don't concoct elaborate alibis, as you are bound to slip up eventually. If more than one of you has been arrested, the police may try to play you off against each other by saying "Jack's confessed to everything", etc. Just ignore it if it happens. Arrest can be a frightening experience, especially for the first time. However, it needn't be too traumatic if you are prepared for it. Unlikely as it may sound, getting arrested can also be an empowering and positive experience; a liberating break through the fear barrier.

Whilst in custody, don't aggravate the police, stay calm, meditate, or sing to keep your spirits up, and remember that you will be released again, even if time seems to be crawling along. The best-laid plans can go wrong, of course, but this booklet is intended to help ensure as far as possible that you are never in this situation in the first place.

Security, Secrecy and Paranoia



Sloppiness might land you in the dock; paranoia can be paralysing, counter-productive, and an ego-trip. Are they out to get you? Phones and faxes do get tapped, mail checked, people watched. On the other hand you and your activities might not be of as much concern to the authorities as you think they are.

It's up to you how careful you want to be, but do at any rate consider the issue, and be mindful at every stage of the potential security risks of your methods. It is better to be too cautious than too cavalier; those who are careful stay free.
If you want to be on the safe side:

· Do not discuss the possibility of an action, the arrangements, or indeed anything at all to do with the action, on the phone, by fax or by e-mail. Do it in person.

· Do not talk about the action with anyone other than those directly involved in it. It can be difficult to resist sharing the excitement, but the information may be passed on unwittingly or naively until at some point it reaches the ears of someone unsympathetic. If you tell only one person, and they tell only one person, who tells only one person, etc...and gossip usually spreads much faster than that.

· Do not use your own mobile phone on the action or in advance. If you are going to need mobile communication, then buy a pay-as-you-go phone and register it under a bogus name and address. You can return most makes within two weeks for a full refund.

· Buy any equipment for the action with cash, including fuel.

· Don't produce anything related to the action on your own computer.

These precautions, and the other security considerations and contingencies discussed in this guide, may seem absurdly cloak-and-dagger to you. If you just can't be bothered with all that malarkey, then you might want to think again and consider doing an open action, which avoids most of that stuff. If you are going to take the precautions outlined in this guide, don't get into a neurotic, paranoid lather about it. Just follow them straightforwardly and without fuss. 90% of the time they will be unnecessary, it is the unlikely and unexpected you are guarding against.

don't sleep well.

The best time to arrive is around midnight; early enough that a bit of traffic will not seem too unusual, but late enough to avoid the pub traffic and most other people.

In the height of summer you will need to leave the site by 3am as it is getting light. Set your departure time on the safe side. You will be very tired after 2 or 3 hours' work, and may have a fair trudge back to the vehicles. 3-4am is the dead hour, when almost everyone is sound asleep, and few police are about. By 5am on a weekday morning - and even to some extent on a Saturday - you should be blending into the early morning commuter traffic on some main road or motorway. Early Sunday morning the roads are unfortunately dead, which is a disadvantage. But then you may find that you are able to get more people for a Saturday night action, if your friends are working.

Doing It

Try to leave as little as possible to be done on the day of the action. Everything always takes longer than you think it will and you might end up eating into the action time, which could prove crucial. Having to rush things on the day will also leave you wired, tired and frenetic come the end of the day - not a desirable state in which to do an action. A checklist for before you leave home:

· Remove anything incriminating from your home: maps, notes, messages, scribbles, receipts, address book, genetics literature, anything you wouldn't want the police to see. Destroy anything you don't absolutely need in the future, and leave the rest with someone who is above suspicion.

· Check your vehicle and remove anything incriminating and inessential.

· Check your clothes' pockets. Do not take anything that may give a clue to your identity: wallet, purse, keys, bank/library cards, etc., and anything you might drop or lose from your pockets that may carry your fingerprints.

· Remove any jewellery, piercings, etc., in case you lose them on site or look conspicuous because of them.

· Fix specs to your person in case they fall off and you can't find them.

· Check that you have plenty of fuel in the vehicles to get there, and to get away again. Avoid buying fuel from garages in the vicinity of the crop, as you and your vehicles will then be on camera.

· Take food for before and afterwards, a hot flask to return to in the vehicles, and plenty of water. You may want to take water on to the site as it can be thirsty

From the park-up you will need to find a safe route on foot to the trial site. The advantages of a park-up are that more people, i.e. the drivers, can take part in the decontamination (although you might still want to leave someone watching over the vehicles, with a mobile link to the site, in case of surprises), and that it halves the amount of vehicular activity in the area. The great disadvantage is that you might find yourself trapped if the police, or a farmer, discovers the park-up. Also, a park-up means that the drivers are particularly vulnerable as they cannot really abandon the vehicles and escape on foot in an emergency, as everyone else can.

2. The Drop-off

In this case the drivers drop the others off at a secluded spot near-ish to the crop, and drive away again to wait outside the area.

Arrange a time and place to be picked up again. Also arrange a second fall-back pick- up place and later time in case the first one does not for whatever reason work out. The drivers return again at the specified time.

The advantages of this method are that you do not have to leave vehicles vulnerably parked or (seemingly) abandoned. It also gives a choice of routes back to a vehicular escape.

The disadvantages are that it reduces the number of people on the crop as it occupies all the drivers; it doubles the number of vehicle journeys in and out of the area, which may cause disturbance and attract suspicion in a quiet rural area; and the plan is vulnerable to unforeseen hold-ups or mishaps at either end, as timing is crucial. A mobile phone link between vehicle and crop party helps with this. (Remember when on actions to have your phone on minimum ring volume, or on vibrate.)

Often you will find that the situation of the site determines which of these two options you plump for, so that your mind is made up for you.

Timing the Action

If at all possible, carry out the action before the crop flowers and spreads genetic pollution by pollination. Approximate flowering times are given in the section on crop types below, but these will vary according to sowing times, weather, soil, etc., so you may need to monitor its progress and play it by ear.

Ideally, choose the dark moon rather than full moon, and bad weather over good weather. Few people will be about in bad weather, wind and rain drowns out the noise of your vehicles and rustlings. Avoid warm, muggy nights when people

Transport

If your test site is on your back doorstep, then you can just walk or take bikes. If the site is further afield you will need vehicles.

Ideally an action vehicle will be a smart, middle of the range car in a forgetable colour. It should be reliable, reasonably quiet and unremarkable. Nothing flashy, nothing shabby. If you have the resources, then rent a car.

If the action involves large numbers of people, then minibuses are probably the best idea, as it cuts down the numbers of vehicles breaking the peace of sleepy country areas.
After you get home, make sure that you clean the vehicle thoroughly, inside and out.

When you recce, find a safe road route for leaving the site. Ideally, this will take you 30 or 40 miles away from the site on minor roads, free of speed traps, traffic monitoring cameras, CCTV covering roadside premises, and bored late-night traffic cops. If the driver has driven the route beforehand, it saves a lot of anxiety and indecision on the night. If the action involves several vehicles, then prepare a few routes, to avoid a suspicious-looking late night convoy.

Record details of these routes. If you need to distribute directions to drivers who have not previously driven these routes, you could write them on rice paper (available from supermarket baking aisles). Then the directions can be gradually eaten as the journey goes on.

Numbers

At a pinch, and working hard, two people could tackle smaller trial sites. More comfortably, and companionably, four to six people are enough to decontaminate most NSL trials in a few hours. Some need as many as three or four carloads.

You only need to destroy 60-75% of a trial to seriously disrupt it though, of course, getting the whole lot is preferable. But even if you manage to decontaminate a smaller percentage of the crop, it all helps to make an impact and increase the pressure.

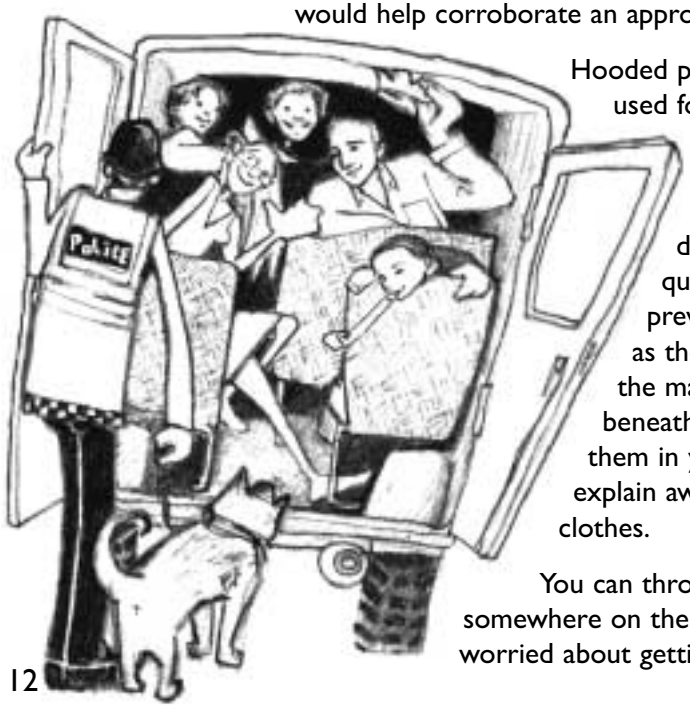
If you have enough people, find a couple of people to stay at home on the end of the phone. These might be people who would like to help but want a non-arrestable role. If you can only find one person, they could combine the following jobs. One of these will be a contact person who you can ring in case of problems, e.g. someone who can arrange to have you picked up if, for some reason, you find yourself lost in the countryside and separated from your friends at 5 o'clock in the morning. Those on the action will need to memorise this person's phone number, or write it on their arm.

The other person will do prisoner support for anyone arrested: finding out from the police who is in custody, lobbying for their speedy release, taking in chocolate and newspapers, and arranging for them to be met and hugged when they get out.

For FSTs, you may need larger groups of people. 6 people have made a sizeable dent in a farm-scale maize trial in a night, so it is worth having a go no matter how small your group. But the more the merrier. The logistics get pretty complicated, but you will need plenty of people to make much of an impact on oilseed rape or beet FSTs. As many as 80 people have been spirited to and away again from successful FST actions, without any problems.

Clothing

Wear old, disposable, dark coloured clothing, and take a spare set to change into when you get back to the vehicles. There are several good reasons for changing your clothes. You will be soaking wet from dew, plant juices and possibly rain, and you may well be cold, so a warm dry set of clothes will be welcome. The juice from some plants has a distinctive smell - particularly oilseed rape, which has a sweet and powerful aroma that will fill your vehicle and smell rather peculiar to any cop who pulls you over for a random late-night spot check. Changing will reduce the risk of spreading genetic contamination from the crop. If the police stop you, a set of normal, respectable clothes will help you pass yourselves off as model citizens. Alternatively, you could wear your snazziest party gear for the journey home, which would help corroborate an appropriate clubbing/party story.



Hooded paper coveralls of the type used for decorating have been used in the past to go over clothes. But they are flimsy, hard to get hold of in dark colours, and are of questionable value in preventing cross-contamination as the plant juices soak through the material into the clothes beneath anyway. Also, a bag of them in your car boot are harder to explain away than a bag of old clothes.

You can throw the used clothes away somewhere on the way home if you are worried about getting stopped.

The safest thing to do is to chuck away the old clothes you used after the action, along with the footwear. They will hold fragments of the crop and the soil from the field, which can be distinguished by forensics.

Fitness

Crop actions are done by all sorts of people, with all levels of fitness, or lack of it. It is worth bearing in mind though that covert actions can be strenuous and tiring. So if you're really keen you could do something to improve your fitness level a bit before hand. But otherwise just go at your own pace, and have plenty of rests if you need to.

Security

On-site security is relatively rare, but it does happen. Trials at testing centres such as NIAB (National Institute for Agricultural Botany) sites are more likely to have security precautions. Very rarely, a zealous and paranoid farmer will take to patrolling his field at night.

If you want to be absolutely sure, then stake the place out overnight. Find a hidden vantage-point, take a sleeping bag, camping mat, food, drink, a notebook, and a friend, and sit there all night watching, taking shifts. It's a dull job, and it isn't often done, but it's up to you… .

Two Types of Action:

1. The Park-up

For this type of action you park and leave the vehicles for the duration of the action. You will need to find a secluded spot to park. Things to check are:

· That there is reasonably hard standing, so that vehicles won't get bogged down and stuck.

· That the park-up is not visible from the road or from nearby houses.

· That all vehicles can park without boxing each other in, and can all leave without waiting for another car to move first. (This is not always possible, but try your best to find one.)

· Preferably, try and find a park-up with more than one exit route in case one becomes blocked off (again, this is a rare find, but good if you can get it).