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Phytoremediation

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Phytoremediation combines the Greek word "phyton", (plant), with the Latin word "remediare", (to remedy) to describe a system whereby certain plants, working together with soil organisms, can transform contaminants into harmless and often, valuable forms. This practice is increasingly used to remediate sites contaminated with heavy metals and toxic organic compounds. Routine harvesting of phytomass is however required to remove the accumulated contaminants.Compounds are frequently transformed in the plant tissue into less toxic forms or sequestered and concentrated so they can be removed (harvested) with the plant. For example, mustard greens were used to remove 45% of the excess lead from a yard in Boston to ensure the safety of children who play there. The sequestered lead was carefully removed and safely disposed of. Besides mustard greens, pumpkin vines were used to clean up an old Magic Marker factory site in Trenton, New Jersey