



THE NEXT STEP Toward a Healthier Future

A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SEBASTOPOL TOXICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Discarding Wisely

Each new year offers us a handy time to declare the changes that we want to make in our lives.

And, if one of your current New Year's resolutions is ridding yourself of unwanted items, this article will help you discard your detritus, especially toxics, in ways that protect people and the planet.

Disposal Options

■ **The Sonoma County Household Toxics Facility** is a key resource for folks wanting to properly dispose of toxics and other items that shouldn't go in the trash. This includes batteries, paints, pesticides, car fluids, expired pharmaceuticals, and fluorescent lightbulbs.

Located at the Central Disposal Site (aka the dump) at 500 Meham Rd. in Petaluma, the Facility is open Thurs. through Sat. from 7:30am to 2:30pm. Be sure to pack materials safely for transport, and bring your ID to prove residency.

For more about which materials are toxic, additional drop-off points, and business disposal options, check out the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency (SCWMA) Eco-Desk resources listed at the end of this article.

■ **Community Toxics Collections** are another

useful disposal option. Held around the county each Tuesday, the next Sebastopol one is on March 2. To make an appointment, call 795-2025 or (877) 747-1870. Bring your ID to prove residency.

■ **Electronic waste** (aka e-waste) is also not allowed in the trash, because it contains hidden toxics that leach from landfills to poison people and ecosystems. E-waste includes cell phones, TVs, VCRs, household appliances, and computer and stereo equipment.

Some of these items can be donated to the nonprofit Computer Recycling Center (Santa Rosa, www.crc.org, 570-1600), which repairs, resells, and donates the refurbished results. You can also recycle e-waste through all Sonoma County Refuse Disposal Sites and some curbside services.

Or look for periodic e-waste events. SCWMA's next ones are Jan. 9-10 in Santa Rosa, Feb. 27-28 in Healdsburg, and March 13-14 in Cloverdale. See the Eco-Desk (below) for more about these and other drop-off options.

■ **Pharmaceuticals and over-the-counter medicines** also shouldn't go in the garbage or down the drain, because they can harm wildlife and water supplies.

Instead, drop these items at the Household Toxics Facility and Community Toxics Collections (above), or at the locations listed at www.rwater shed.org/safemeds. This webpage also describes important rules. Drop-off points in Sebastopol include the CVS and Safeway pharmacies.



It's Our Birthday!!

With this issue, we're celebrating *nine years* publishing *The Next STEP (TNS)*! **The goal of this innovative City project is to nurture a healthier Sebastopol for everyone by reducing our exposure to toxics.**

Thus we encourage voluntary reductions in the use of toxics in all areas of our lives — including our homes, schools, businesses, parks, food, and environment.

TNS is produced by a small team of local citizens, working on a volunteer basis (which keeps costs very low) because we support this goal! We're grateful to the City Council and staff for acting in the community's best interest with this project.

Please fill out the enclosed survey card to give us your feedback about our efforts. Also let us know how we can best support your toxics reduction in the upcoming year, including any questions, tips, story ideas, or success stories. Your support is what makes this project possible. Thank you!



For more information

■ **The Sonoma County Eco-Desk** offers great specifics about local recycling, donation, and disposal options. Look at SCWMA's website www.recyclenow.org or in the recycling section of the AT&T Yellow Pages (under "R"). You can also call them at (707) 565-3375.

I hope this information helps you make your space-clearing New Year's dreams come true!

~ Patricia Dines

Quick Toxics Reduction Tips

Keeping Your Pet Safe

In *TNS VI/1*, we talked about the toxics in pet care products that can harm both people and animals. Children are especially vulnerable. (For more, see the [TNS Index](#) under *Pets*.)

I've recently found another resource to help you safely care for your creature companions. The Green Paws website at www.greenpaws.org makes it easy for you to look up the toxicity of specific products and take action to encourage better regulations.

Also, check to be sure that your pet's collar doesn't include the toxic carbaryl. The manufacturer has finally consented to withdraw this product, but not until Sept. 2010.

Handy Reference Chart

TNS readers have asked for quick reference information about toxics and alternatives. So I was happy to discover a handy overview chart from the University of California which describes key ways to reduce toxics in your home, work, shopping, and community. Use it for action ideas

and post it for others. <http://prhe.ucsf.edu/prhe/pdfs/ToxicMatters.pdf>

Supporting Better Labeling

In past issues we've talked about the hidden toxics in cleansers and other common household products. These include chemicals that harm the environment and are linked to increased cases of cancer (including breast cancer), asthma, birth defects, neurological disease, and more.

However, the lack of ingredients information on these labels makes it hard for us to know how to protect ourselves and our families.

Thankfully, good news has emerged on this front with the proposed Household Product Labeling Act (S. 1697), which would require labels to indicate the toxics inside.

I encourage you to voice your support for this long-needed right-to-know law. Just go to www.breastcancerfund.org and click on Action Center.

Traveling Toxics

It can be easy to think that environmental toxics primarily impact folks in more industrialized areas. However, human-made chemicals are unfortunately being found every-

where on the planet, even in remote spots such as the Arctic.

The reason is simple: all ecosystems are connected by the miraculous systems of air and water that circulate the globe. A recent *Scientific American* article explores how these systems work and what toxics are being discovered.

To me, this is just another reason that protecting ourselves requires reducing both our individual and shared usage of these toxic pollutants. www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=how-do-toxic-chemicals-move-around-planet

More Great Info Online

For more helpful information about toxics and alternatives, see our handy online index by topic at www.healthyworld.org/STEPIndex.html. Here you'll find information about Mice, Moths, Mold and Mildew, Weeds, Household Cleaners, Paints and Stains, Snails and Slugs, Green Remodeling, and more.

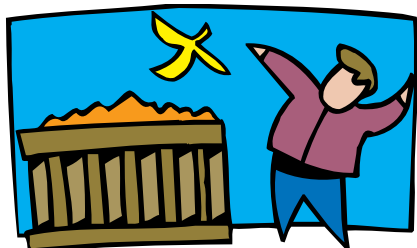
Also, for a systematic approach to less-toxic management of ants, see my Ask EcoGirl article, "Taming Our Tiny Ant Friends" at www.patriciadines.info/EcoGirl2e.html.

~ Patricia Dines

Composting in Sebastopol

Did you know that 36% of Sonoma County's waste stream is food and other "organic" materials? Yes, we discard 800 tons of it weekly, making it the #1 component of the garbage that we're currently shipping to out-of-county landfills.

That's why one of the quickest ways you can reduce your trash is by composting your food and yard waste. You might even be able to switch to a cheaper garbage plan!



You can compost even if you don't have a home compost pile. Just put your food waste in the green can! From there, it'll be turned into useful compost that nurtures local farms and gardens.

Most food scraps can go in the green can, including coffee grounds and tea bags. Just don't put in meat, bones, cheese, or oil. It's OK to wrap food in a brown paper bag or newspaper, but don't put in plastic bags or utensils, even the "compostable" ones. There's a handy flyer indicating what's allowed at www.recyclenow.org, which you can print and put on your kitchen bin.

Note: City of Sebastopol residents are part of a pilot program that allows *all* food to go in the green can, including meat and dairy. Don't include animal waste or other trash. If you have questions on this program, call Sonoma Compost at 578-5459.

Also, if your Christmas tree is still lingering, it too can go in the green can. Just remove all decorations and cut it to fit inside. Or ask the Eco-Desk (565-3375) about other tree recycling options.

ABOUT STEP

The Next STEP (TNS) is published six times a year by the **Sebastopol Toxics Education Program (STEP)**. STEP is a project of the City of Sebastopol, implemented by local citizen volunteers. STEP's mission is to support city residents in reducing their toxic use and exposure, creating a healthier and safer Sebastopol for everyone.

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