

THE NEXT STEP

Toward a Healthier Future

A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SEBASTOPOL TOXICS EDUCATION PROGRAM



Local Toxics Disposal

- **The next Sebastopol Toxics Collections Day is December 12**, from 4 to 8pm. To make an appointment, call 707/795-2025 or 877/747-1870 at least 24 hours before the event. You can also drop items at the Household Toxics Facility.
- **For more about local toxics disposal**, see www.recyclenow.org or call 707/565-3375.

Discarding Paint Safely

Did your summer projects leave you with house paint, stain, or varnish that you want to discard? Hopefully you know that these liquids don't go in the black (garbage) can. It's illegal to send them to the landfill, where they would pollute our ecosystems and water supplies — and harm the health of people and animals.

So what should you do with these products? Here's a handy summary:

1) Put empty dry metal and plastic paint containers in your blue (recycling) can, with the lids off. These will then go into the metal or plastic recycling, respectively.

2) Bring house paints, stains, and varnishes to stores in the PaintCare program for free. This includes Sebastopol Hardware. Your products need to be from residential use, or a low-generating business, and can be water-based or oil-based. Be sure that the containers are the (readable) originals, sealed, not leaking, and five gallons or less. Some locations limit customers to 5 gallons total, but they might be flexible, so call ahead if you have more.

Don't bring empty cans to these stores. But do take cans with latex paint dried into a "hockey puck" disk inside. This paint can be recycled! Keep the lid on, and ideally tell the store that dried paint is inside, so it can quickly go in the PaintCare bin.

For more about PaintCare's rules and other area locations, see www.recyclenow.org/toxics/paint.asp.

Note: This program is funded by the fees we pay when we buy these

products. PaintCare sorts the items it receives for the "highest, best use," and seeks to reuse and reprocess as much as possible. Only about 1 to 4% of what it gets can't be used in some way. For more information, see www.paintcare.org/about/#/faqs.

3) Discard these and other toxics via the Household Toxics Facility, a Community Toxics Collections Day, or a Toxics Rover Pickup.

These three programs are run by the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency (SCWMA, www.recyclenow.org). SCWMA takes paint cans in any condition (up to 5 gallon containers). Original containers are preferred but not required. If the container is damaged, place it inside a larger spill-proof receptacle for transport. If it has no label, write on the lid if it's latex or oil-based, if you know.

The Household Toxics Facility is at the Central Disposal Site (aka the dump, 500 Mecham Road, between Cotati and Petaluma). It's open Thurs. to Sat., 7:30am to 2:30pm. No appointment is needed.

See the box above for more about the **Sebastopol Toxics Collections Day**. These two options are free to Sonoma County residents with ID.

Another alternative is to schedule a **Toxics Rover Pickup**, which is \$50 a pickup. There's limited free service available for seniors over 80 and housebound residents.

Free Paint — and More!

There's another exciting wrinkle to SCWMA's toxics services: Any paints and stains that it receives in

good condition are offered to us for free! What a great way to encourage reuse and serve our community.

To see what's available, go to the Central Disposal Site and ask where the reuse locker is. It's open Thurs. to Sat., 7:30am to 2:30pm. Selection is better earlier in that time period. Take only what you need, so there's enough for all.

Reducing Paint Waste

1) When buying paint, get just what's needed for each project, when possible. This reduces the amount you have to store, recycle, or discard afterwards. (Of course, we sometimes keep leftovers for touch-ups and future projects.)

2) Store paint properly to keep it fresh and usable. Here are Sebastopol Hardware's suggestions. For water-based latex paint, use a wet paper towel to clean out the groove. Then cover the opening with plastic wrap, and press the lid on securely. Store it in a place with moderate room temperature to avoid freezing.

For oil-based paint, put waxed paper on the paint surface itself. Then, when you open the can to use it again, just lift off the waxed paper, and the film at the top comes with it!

For more about less-toxic paint purchasing and cleanup, see **Paint** in the STEP Online Index, at www.healthyworld.org/STEPIndex.html.



Local Governments Are Reconsidering Toxic Herbicides

In July, the City of Santa Rosa decided to invite landscaping companies to bid on providing less-toxic grounds maintenance services for the City's parks, road medians, and buildings. Goals being discussed include transitioning away from synthetic herbicides (including the glyphosate-based Roundup) and following the less-toxic methods outlined by the Russian River Watershed Association (www.rwatershed.org/project/russian-river-friendly-landscape-guidelines).

The City's Request for Proposal (RFP), expected by October, will ask companies to bid both a less-toxic approach and a synthetic one. This will allow the City to compare the two, including any cost differences.

Helping spur the City's toxics re-examination are local residents and activists, including the grassroots environmental nonprofit Sonoma County Conservation Action (SCCA). SCCA currently has a campaign to encourage the City of Santa Rosa and the Santa Rosa School District to switch from toxic herbicides to non-toxic approaches (www.conservactionaction.org/news/roundup).

Proponents of safer alternatives seek to eliminate the health and environmental harm that toxic pesticides do to workers, community members, and visitors at these

public sites, including children and pets. Roundup is one focus; see the box for more about its harm.

Other places taking action

Other local governments have already walked this path of reducing toxics in their land maintenance.

For instance, Marin County has eliminated its use of glyphosate and rodenticides on the 126 public sites the County manages. Instead, it uses least-toxic alternatives, improved landscape design, increased mulching, compost teas, volunteer Adopt-a-Park programs, and more. (See www.marincountyparks.org/depts/pk/our-work/parks-main-projects/integrated-pest-management.)

Also, according to the *Press Democrat* (PD), the City of Petaluma has largely suspended its use of Roundup and similar weedkillers, and is developing proposed rules to prohibit their use in parks.

Even the Santa Rosa Water Department temporarily stopped its use of synthetic herbicides such as glyphosate at its 67 "urban" sites, in 2015, and uses less-toxic options.

The PD article about Santa Rosa's decision also mentioned the City of Sebastopol's pioneering declaration of Sebastopol as a "voluntary toxics-free zone" in 2000. (This STEP newsletter came from that.) However, the PD didn't mention that the City also committed then to avoiding toxic pesticides on its own land, and has only used its emergency exemption twice for outdoor spaces.

Sebastopol manages its weeds with mowing and weed eaters instead. It also uses Burnout (a citric acid/clove oil product) in focused spots, such as around trees and lawn edges, where mowers can't get. The Burnout Safety Data Sheet (SDS) lists no systemic health impacts. It can be an irritant at application, so users should wear protective gear. (More about the City's journey is at www.healthyworld.org/STEP.html.)

My suggestions

Of course, I'm delighted that municipalities are making these positive choices. And my suggestion is that any entity choosing

to avoid toxic pesticides create a strong Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan that outlines how weeds, bugs, etc. will be managed, and clearly states what toxics are prohibited or only to be used as a last resort. I also suggest not just banning particular products (such as Roundup) but also indicating some measure of toxicity, so that other toxic (or more toxic) products aren't just swapped in. For more on IPM, see www.healthyworld.org/GRAPHICS/STEP/stepvol2no6.pdf.

SOURCES: "Santa Rosa may rethink use of chemical sprays such as Roundup in parks," www.pressdemocrat.com/news/7197261-181/santa-rosa-may-rethink-use • www.sonoma-countygazette.com/sonoma-county-news/glyphosate-in-santa-rosa-water-1

The Problem with Glyphosate

Glyphosate (Roundup's primary ingredient) is the world's most widely used herbicide, with 1.4 billion pounds applied annually.

While some people perceive glyphosate as safe, it's actually toxic to humans and animals, with harm including skin rashes, burning eyes, dizziness, difficulty breathing, cardiac depression, gastrointestinal pain, vomiting, and accumulation of fluid in lungs.

Glyphosate is the top reported cause of pesticide illness for California landscape maintenance workers, and can cause notable harm even just with casual contact. It's also been linked to non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, cataracts, genetic damage, reduced sperm counts, miscarriages, and thyroid, pancreatic, and liver tumors.

Glyphosate can also kill the earthworms and beneficial insects that are so vital to healthy ecosystems. Plus, tests show that it can drift up to 1,300 feet during ground application, risking harm to nearby people, animals, and plants.

California State has said that it will list glyphosate as a known carcinogen under California's Proposition 65. The World Health Organization has called it "probably carcinogenic" to humans.

For more details, see **Roundup** in the Online STEP Index.

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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