

THE NEXT STEP

Toward a Healthier Future

A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SEBASTOPOL TOXICS EDUCATION PROGRAM



We Want to Know!

Do you get your City water bill electronically? Or pay it online or with auto-pay? Or perhaps you want to share your thoughts about how we can connect with residents who don't know about this newsletter?

Just by answering a few easy questions in our online survey you can help us with our current outreach planning! The mission of this newsletter project is to help reduce the toxic exposure for everyone in Sebastopol, nurturing a healthier town for all.

Respond to our online survey at www.healthyworld.org/ES.html. (We also have an email option there.) Thank you!

Thank You For Your Feedback!

Thank you to all the Sebastopol residents who took the time to send in your STEP Feedback cards. We appreciate hearing your thoughts about the newsletter, including how you use it and what articles you'd like to see in the future.

So, what were your responses?

■ **93% said that you find *The Next STEP (TNS)* newsletter helpful and interesting.** Reader comments included, "You're doing great!", "Thank you for what you do!", and "Keep up the good work!"

■ Of those responding about pesticide use, **30% said that you use pesticides at home or work. Of those using pesticides, 63% use just natural/nontoxic pesticides** (a nice increase from last year's 50%), and 37% use both natural and synthetic/toxic pesticides.

■ We're delighted that **71% of you said that this newsletter has helped you reduce or avoid the use of toxics.** That really makes our work feel worthwhile!

For instance, readers reported that our information has helped you reduce ant invasions less-toxically, choose less-toxic sunscreens, understand how to read cleaning product labels, and decrease your use of the herbicide Roundup.

Others said that this newsletter "keeps reminding me to look for non-toxic options" and "reinforces what I do." How wonderful!

Congratulations to everyone who's finding ways to reduce or

avoid using toxics. With these choices, you're supporting a healthier and safer water supply, town, and environment for yourself, your family, and our community. What we do in our daily lives really does help to create our world!

Also thank you for your excellent questions and ideas for future articles; you'll find answers already appearing in this issue, and in upcoming editions.

Additionally, as always, we appreciate your acknowledgment of our work. We're delighted to be of assistance.

Please keep your feedback coming! Your input helps us create a newsletter that's useful for you!

We also invite you to share *The Next STEP* with others who might find it of interest. You can help them reduce their toxic exposure — and yours'!



Did You Know?

***The Next STEP* costs the City almost nothing.** It's a bonus for you, created by volunteers, and sent with no added postage expense. Its small copying cost is a drop in the bucket of Sebastopol's \$11 million annual budget. Given the consistent evidence that common toxics are harming us all, this is a bargain for our shared health, now and long into the future.

"I read your article on how to deal with ants more naturally, and it was so helpful!

"Using the vinegar just once reduced the ants by at least 70%. I keep a spray bottle on my kitchen counter, but I rarely even need it now, except after a rain when I might get a few ants. One spray with vinegar takes care of that, and it's easy to clean and doesn't affect my sensitive lungs.

"Do you know that I spent hours on the phone talking to pest control companies, trying to find something affordable and non-toxic? They quoted me between \$200 to \$500. Very few companies use non-toxic pesticides.

"Instead, I spent \$6 on a big bottle of vinegar, and am thrilled that I avoided getting sick and saved that much money!

"Thanks so much for your help, I so appreciate it!"

~ A Sebastopol resident



Easy Answers

One reader asked for “reminders of what you have already written. It’s easy to forget.” So I thought I’d let you know about some articles on your topics of interest in our **Online STEP Index** (see address below).

■ **Managing Ants.** This was a popular topic in our reader survey, with many folks using toxics for ants — or appreciating our advice for avoiding them. To learn my systematic less-toxic and effective approach, developed over the years, just go to the Online STEP Index under **Ants**, and click on issue **XVII/1**.

The short version is this: Follow the ants’ trail to their entry point and block it. Eliminate what’s attracting them. Wipe their trails with a soapy sponge. Spray vinegar there as deterrent. (Test before spraying on rugs or cloth, as it can be slightly bleaching.) My article has important specifics and additional things to try if they persist.

■ **Wrangling Weeds.** This was another common topic in our survey, with many folks using pesticides (herbicides) on them. To see our articles on this topic, go to the Online STEP Index under **Weeds**. Here’s what you’ll find at each issue’s link there.

- Issue **I/3**. The problems with the herbicide Roundup. Using mulches to suppress weed growth. Planting

stronger plants (including natives) to keep the unwanted ones at bay.

- Issue **I/4**. The proven health and environment harm of the herbicide 2,4-D, which for instance can be inside “weed and feed” products.

- Issue **III/2**. Permaculture’s view of weeds as pioneer plants in a succession of evolution. This approach can help us create mature and low-maintenance landscapes.

- Issue **IV/3**. Using vinegar on weeds in spots away from desirable plants, including cracks in pavement. An in-depth exploration of lawn management, including the common toxics to avoid (2,4-D and Roundup), and the less-toxic approaches.

- Issue **IV/4**. Dealing with the weed oxalis. Included is the point that broad-spectrum herbicides kill plants that can keep things in balance (including natives), which allows tougher invasives to spread.

- Issue **XIII/5**. How to cut blackberries and poison oak in the fall, substituting vinegar for an herbicide. Sheet mulching to suppress all plants in an area. Hiring goats to trim weeds, including blackberries.

- Issue **XIV/4**. Learn more about the City of Sebastopol’s successful shift to less-toxic weed management.

- Issue **XV/2**. How to get rid of crabgrass less-toxically.

- Issue **XV/3**. Watch out for hidden toxics, for instance in “weed and feed” products and “flea dips.”

- Issue **XVII/3**. “Weed and feed” products contain toxics — and don’t make sense, because each material should have its own timing and application protocol. More tips and resources for less-toxic weeding.

- Issue **XVII/5**. Local governments reconsidering toxic herbicides.

- Issues **II/4**, **XVII/2**, and **XVII/3**. “Weeds” that are actually herbs used traditionally for food and healing.

■ **And more!** You can also find articles here on other topics you mentioned, including **whiteflies, slugs, rats, gardening, sunscreen, cosmetics, and dryer sheet toxics**.

I hope you find this helpful. As always, we’ll continue to use your comments to guide our content!

~ Patricia Dines

Official Connections

■ **The next Sebastopol Toxics Collection Day is Tues. July 31**, 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.

■ **Anyone can get the STEP newsletter by email.** Sign up at www.healthyworld.org/EList. Feel free to share this with others!

■ **Check out the City newsletter too.** One reader wanted to see ongoing “pertinent town announcements.” Actually, there’s a newsletter for that too! It’s included periodically in your water bill as well. See recent issues at www.ci.sebastopol.ca.us/Document/Newsletters. To get on that email list, send your request to info@cityofsebastopol.org. (Put “City Newsletter” in the subject line.)

“I really appreciate these [STEP] newsletters — both for the information they provide to me — and because they uplevel the knowledge of the community. Thank you!”

~ A Sebastopol resident

Got a pest problem? Or a toxics question?

The Online STEP Index can help! It makes it easy to look up past newsletter issues by topic. There you’ll find our well-researched, condensed, and useful information — to help you get up-to-speed and into action. It also makes it easy to share this information!

www.healthyworld.org/STEPIndex.html

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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