



THE NEXT STEP

Toward a Healthier Future

A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SEBASTOPOL TOXICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Keeping a Healthy Home

Many common household cleaners contain toxics that can cause health problems for your family and pets, through daily use and accidental poisonings. Read the warnings on the labels! For instance:

■ **Ammonia**, found in many cleaners, is an irritant and can cause damage to skin, eyes, and respiratory passages. Ingestion can be corrosive to the mouth, esophagus, and stomach.

■ **Chlorine**, found in bleach and other cleaners, is a toxic gas that's been used as a weapon in war! It's a strong irritant to mucous membranes and can cause coughing, choking, tearing, headache, dizziness – even pulmonary edema, bronchospasm, and death. It's corrosive and can burn skin and damage eyes and other membranes.

Other potentially harmful ingredients found in cleansers include: **lye, formaldehyde, nitrobenzene, phenol, kerosene, naphthalene, pentachlorophenol, perchloroethylene, petroleum distillates, artificial dyes, and fragrances.**

Luckily, you can keep your house just as clean using less-toxic materials! In fact, you can clean most of your house using **vinegar, liquid soap, baking soda, and Bon Ami cleaning powder.** Doesn't that make your supply cabinet lighter! And using these ingredients reduces packaging waste, keeps your home smelling great – and saves you money! For instance, you can:

■ **Clean your bathroom and kitchen surfaces** by mixing a natural biodegradable liquid soap and water in a container, then cleaning with a sponge or cloth. For more scrubbing action, put baking soda on your sponge. And Bon Ami can keep your porcelain clean without the chlorine found in other brands.

■ **Wash your windows** by mixing 1/4 cup vinegar, 2 cups of water, and 1/2 teaspoon of liquid soap in a spray bottle!

■ **Deodorize your carpets** by scattering baking soda, waiting an hour, then vacuuming.

■ **Clean your drain** by pouring in 1/2 cup baking soda then 3 cups boiling water. For more of a "kick", pour 1/2 cup baking soda then 1/2 cup vinegar and cover the drain. They combust together (a fun science experiment for kids of any age!). After 15 minutes, rinse with hot water.

There are an amazing number of cleaning solutions using simple, inexpensive ingredients. To help you make a healthy home, we'll be covering them in future issues. Please send us your tips and questions!

Two notes: When making your concoctions, you can reuse old commercial product bottles; just wash them out well and label them with the new contents. Also, nontoxic does not mean you should leave it around for a toddler to drink!

SOURCES: *Nontoxic, Natural, & Earthwise*, by Debra Lynn Dadd. *The Green Kitchen Handbook* and *Clean & Green*, by Annie Berthold-Bond. *Toxics A to Z*, by John Harte, et al.

~ Patricia Dines with Rebecca Dwan



It's Our Birthday!!

With this issue, we're celebrating our first year publishing The Next STEP! Thanks to everyone who helps make this project possible – including the City Council and City staff who support us in bringing this information to you.

We're enthusiastically preparing for another year of providing you with useful information for making a healthier home and world.

Please fill out and return the enclosed survey card, so we can know how best to support you! And we invite you anytime to send your questions, tips, comments, story ideas, news, class notices, etc. Have you or your organization reduced or avoided using toxics? We'd love to know about and share your story!



"I have enjoyed reading The Next STEP newsletter very much. Thank You! The newsletter gives me a proud and SAFE feeling of living in a community who cares about this issue. Good work!"

~ Sandi Maurer

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"I appreciate The Next STEP [TNS] because it spreads the word about issues that people need to know about. Even though I haven't done it yet, I'm closer to an environmentally friendly use of batteries because TNS reminds me and offers practical ways to do it. For example, I learned from TNS that you can recharge regular batteries!"

~ Sheila Signer

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"I want to tell you how much I enjoy your newsletter. I think it's fabulous! The [article on the herbicide] 2,4-D was quite a story! Thank you so much."

~ Bridget

Building Sebastopol's Soil: The City Council's Biodegradable Resolution

Recently, the Sebastopol City Council voted *unanimously* to support a resolution requiring that, on city property, only materials that will biodegrade be used for landscaping. There are two exceptions: (1) for irrigation supplies, and (2) for poly-weed cloth that's used as a temporary weed suppressant, if it's later removed.

The resolution also states that the city will end its use of pressure-treated wood for tree stakes when the current supply runs out, thus reducing the harm to the soil and ourselves from the toxic materials in this wood.

This resolution is a major step to rebuilding the topsoil on city property, which is the bank account of nutrition for future vibrant and beautiful plant growth.



~ Craig Litwin

ABOUT STEP

The Next STEP is published six times a year for Sebastopol residents by the **Sebastopol Toxics Education Program (STEP)**.

STEP's mission is to support Sebastopol citizens in reducing their toxic use and exposure, creating a healthier and safer Sebastopol for everyone.

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You can help make STEP possible! Write an article, share your success story, or be a liaison to businesses or schools. Together we can support our community's conversion to less-toxic alternatives! To find out more, call 829-2999.

Come Nurture Plants With Us!

You're invited to come nurture plants with us! On **Sun., Jan. 6** and **Sun., Feb. 3**, from 12-4pm, Planting Earth Activation (PEA) and STEP will be meeting at the Sebastopol Community Garden to propagate plants for future plantings on city property. Head east on Laguna Parkway past the movie theatre. Pass Flynn St. and the garden is on the left. We'll be in the greenhouse. Also, on **Sun. March 3**, 12-4pm, we're meeting at the Sebastopol police station to continue landscaping there.

City Council Recognizes Patricia Dines for Community Service

At the Nov. 20 Sebastopol City Council meeting, Mayor Larry Robinson presented Patricia Dines with a proclamation recognizing her for "outstanding service in the community as an advocate and proactive role model for a culture without toxics."

Included was recognition for Ms. Dines' work helping launch and editing The Next STEP newsletter, as well as for her "contribution to the greater community" by publishing The Organic Guide to Sonoma, Napa, and Mendocino Counties and other community projects.

Said Ms. Dines, "I think it's wonderful that this City Council, and the previous one, have had the vision to create and encourage the STEP program, with the support of members of the community. It's a real pleasure to work with Craig Litwin and Rebecca Dwan in creating The Next STEP newsletter, and to share with others what we've found out about toxics and alternatives – so that we can all have healthier, more joyful lives."

~ Craig Litwin

Enjoy the New Covert Lane Landscaping!

The City Council recently approved funds to re-landscape the median strips on Covert Lane (near the Ragle Park entrance). The old landscaping was diseased and dying, infested with moths, and not drought-resistant.

The re-landscaping project was designed through a collaborative effort including Dante Del Prete from the Public Works Department, Craig Litwin representing Planting Earth Activation (PEA), and Becky Duckles, the City's contract arborist. The plan was presented to and approved by both the Design Review Board and the City Council, and included drought-resistant plants; a diverse selection to provide color in specific areas; and extensive mulch.

The project is nearing completion, and so far is within budget due to Dante's efforts in pursuing donations of plants and mulch, and in coordinating volunteers to assist with the work. The City can be proud to show off this newly landscaped area that was made possible through a community effort!

~ Rich Emig
Public Works Superintendent



The Garden Corner

Every day of the year there are plants that we can put in the ground and enjoy the rewards later on. Here are some wonderful treats you can plant now!

■ **Bare Root:** Fruit trees, perennial flowers, roses, cane berries, grapes, artichokes, asparagus, strawberries.

■ **Transplant:** Leeks, onions, spinach, cabbage, mustard, yarrow, lavender, sage, hollyhock, foxglove.

This is also a good time to **prune** fruit trees, roses, vines, berries – and start or continue your **compost** pile.

SOURCE: Gardening by the Moon Calendar
You can get your own copy at local garden supply stores like Frizelle-Enos, Bassignani Nursery, and Harmony Farm Supply & Nursery.