



THE NEXT STEP Toward a Healthier Future

A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SEBASTOPOL TOXICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Join in Celebrating Sebastopol's Centennial!


Sebastopol is turning 100 this year, and among the events local folks are planning is the City's Centennial celebration on Sat. June 15!

You can be part of this event and help make it happen. For information on having a booth, making a donation, or volunteering, see the City's website < www.ci.sebastopol.ca.us > or call Sue Kelly or Debbie Paine at 823-5331 or 823-2151.

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Like any milestone birthday, this is a powerful time for us all to reflect on where the city has been over the past century and where we want it to go in the next. What do we love about living here that we'd like to preserve for future generations? What would we like to see improved? And how can we each pitch in with our unique style and skills to help make that happen?

Go Plant a Tree



One vision the City's Centennial Planning Committee has chosen is to encourage Sebastopol folks to plant trees in their front yards. Their goal is 100 new trees across town! With this simple act, we can all enhance the small-town beauty of Sebastopol, add value to our homes, provide shelter from the heat, help clean

and filter our air, and offer habitat for songbirds long into the future.

And, of course, STEP invites you to care for your new trees without toxic pesticides. To avoid pest problems, select the right tree for the right site, buy good-quality pest-free trees, and maintain them properly.

For more information on tree choice and maintenance, look in garden books or ask your local nursery. The City has also developed a list of trees that work well in town; it will soon be on their website or contact Kenyon Webster at 823-6167. Also let him know if you plant a tree, so it can be counted in the total!

~ Patricia Dines

Create a Centennial Garden

Another way we can celebrate this milestone is by planting Centennial Gardens in our front yards. Small or large, they'll provide beauty and natural habitat for years to come.

We encourage you to feature native plants in your garden. Because they're suited to this climate, they're easier to care for and less likely to have pest problems. Plus they nurture and connect us to our local ecosystems and the creatures that depend on them - like local butterflies.

If you have kids, have them help so they can tell their grandchildren they were here for the centennial and planted these lasting beauties that should spread and get better each year. Take a picture of everyone in front of your tree or garden, and watch everyone grow together.

Here are two beautiful native flowers for your Centennial Garden:

■ **Matilija Poppy** (*Romneya coulteri*): You've surely noticed these around town blooming late spring to fall—tall stalks (to 4-5 feet) with large (to 4") white crinkly petals surrounding a yellow-orange center. If you're concerned about spreading, plant with some barriers in the ground or in a contained sidewalk area, as it will spread with rhizomes under ground. (After all, it's a native and does very well here!) This poppy likes sun and is loved by butterflies. It combines well visually with other flowers, including "regular" California poppies and other natives. It's best to plant in early spring or fall; try not to disturb the root ball when planting.

■ **Dutchman's Pipe** (*Aristolochia californica*): This exotic-looking vine is habitat for the lovely endangered local Pipevine Swallowtail butterfly. Plant this one if you need something that will grow in the shade. The vine can grow up a trellis or climb up trees, bushes, or fences. It makes a lovely arbor, with green and yellow meerscham pipe blossoms. Plant this in the fall or winter.

You can get these and other natives at local nurseries specializing in natives, such as Harmony Farm Supply or Mostly Natives.

~ Rebecca Dwan

Nurture a Healthier Future

When asked for his thoughts on the Centennial, City Councilmember Larry Robinson reflected, "A hundred years ago, when Sebastopol was first incorporated as a city, all farming was organic and no one worried about poisons in their fruits and vegetables. Now, at the start of the 21st century, more and more people are coming to understand the short-sightedness of poisoning our land and water to attempt to temporarily increase yields and grow more uniform produce. Organic agriculture is once again becoming an important part of our local economy and culture.

"What could be a more fitting way to honor our heritage and celebrate our community's 100th birthday than to return to the best practices of our ancestors and just say 'no' to toxics? What better way to begin the next hundred years and declare our faith in the future than to plant a redwood or a Gravenstein apple tree?"

City Welcomes New Volunteer Coordinator

From re-landscaping on City land to Laguna restoration, much is being done to enhance Sebastopol's natural beauty. And even more could be accomplished with added help.

So the City decided to hire a part-time Volunteer Coordinator, to coordinate volunteers who want to help with City projects. After holding interviews, they recently hired Sally Soufer for this position.

Sally has worked as the Petaluma Coordinator for the Volunteer Center of Sonoma County; as coordinator for SSU's Festival on the Green; and she's currently also working at the Petaluma Visitors Center.

Sally will be working 15 hours a week in this 6-month pilot project. City officials anticipate that this will allow the City to save money and accomplish more, while making it easier for community members to pitch in.

To contact Sally about volunteering with the City, call 823-1153.

Thanks for your help, Sally!

~ 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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Vinegar: Your Multi-purpose Cleaner

As we started exploring in the last issue, you can keep your house clean, healthy, and smelling fresh using simple, inexpensive, nontoxic materials – like plain old white vinegar!

As previous generations knew so well, white vinegar is a weak acetic acid that disinfects, deodorizes, cuts grease, inhibits mold, dissolves accumulated minerals, makes glass and chrome shiny, and freshens the air. You'll be amazed at what simple vinegar can do for you!

In the last issue we gave recipes for using vinegar to clean your windows and drains. Here are some more ways you can use vinegar:

■ **Clean no-wax floors** with 1 cup vinegar per gallon of water. It makes your floors clean and shiny!

■ **Freshen your clothes** by adding 1/2 cup vinegar to the rinse water in your washer. It will help brighten brights, decrease lint, and get rid of odors (great for socks and diapers!).



■ **Wash your eyeglasses** with a drop of vinegar, then dry with a soft cotton cloth. Nice and sparkly!

■ **Clean your wooden cutting board** by wiping it with vinegar. (Note: You can also help avoid problems with bacteria from raw meat on your cutting board by preparing meat on washable plates instead.)

■ **Discourage cats from windowsills and other areas** in your home by spraying vinegar there. (Before using on fabrics, test on a hidden area; it can stain.)

■ **Wash your skunk-sprayed dog or kid** with 1/2 vinegar, 1/2 water, avoiding the eyes. Rinse with warm water.

Vinegar cleaning is something kids can help with, since it is nontoxic, but they should be old enough to avoid vinegar in their eyes.

As you discover vinegar's many wonderful uses, you might want to keep two spray bottles in your cabinet, one with straight vinegar, the other with half vinegar and half water. Remember to label your home formulas! Also, avoid mixing vinegar and bleach; it creates a toxic gas.

For many other uses for vinegar, plus other less-toxic cleaning tips, see Noel-Marie Taylor's web site (www.newhomemaker.com) and Annie Berthold-Bond's (www.betterbasics.com).

~ Rebecca Dwan
with Patricia Dines

Come Plant with Us!

Join STEP and Planting Earth Activation (PEA) in re-landscaping and beautifying Sebastopol! Our next volunteer days are **Sun. April 7th, Sun. May 5th, and Sun. June 2nd**, from 12-4pm. Meet at the movie theatre parking lot, across the street from the police station. Bring water to drink plus tools and a wheelbarrow if you have them. See you there!



The Garden Corner

Spring is here! Now is the time to plant strawberries, squash, carrots, turnips, potatoes, onions, kale, lettuce, chard, spinach, peas, celery, radishes, and chives.

For flowers, you can plant alyssum, poppies, calendula, violas, and pansies. (The last three have wonderful edible flowers.)

SOURCE: *Gardening by the Moon*, 2002.

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.