



# THE NEXT STEP Toward a Healthier Future

A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SEBASTOPOL TOXICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

## Thanks for Your Feedback!

**Thank you to the 270 Sebastopol residents who returned your STEP Survey cards!**

What were your responses?

- 85% said you find *The Next STEP* newsletter helpful and interesting.
- Of those responding about pesticide use, 55% said you don't use pesticides at home or work and 45% said you do. Of those, about 26% use just natural pesticides, 32% just synthetic, and 42% use both.
- We were delighted that 64% of you said that this newsletter has helped you reduce your use of toxics. It was valuable to hear your examples – from using soapy water on aphids to encouraging beneficial bugs in your garden to cleaning your drain less-toxically. We're glad we can assist you in creating healthier homes – and a healthier world for us all!

And thank you for your many excellent ideas for future issues (stay tuned!) as well as your appreciation for our work. We appreciate it!

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



## Key Facts About STEP

From some responses, we saw that not everyone is familiar with the specifics of STEP.

**If you had questions about STEP, we hope you'll read this information to better understand the STEP project!**

■ **STEP is a project of the City of Sebastopol.** It was created in May 2000 by the previous City Council. Their intention was to help protect the health of everyone in Sebastopol by supporting voluntary reduction of pesticide use and thus reduced exposure to toxics in our shared water and air. Currently, STEP's primary project is this newsletter, which is included in City water bills to reach as many residents as possible while avoiding added postage costs.

■ **Volunteers are key to the City's implementation of STEP.** From our commitment to support the community's well-being, local folks have stepped forward, on a volunteer basis, to help the City create and implement STEP. All of the writing, editing, and laying out of the newsletter is done by volunteers.

■ **Toxics have been shown to threaten us all.** We contribute this service to the community because we have seen so clearly the heart-breaking harm that toxics can do to our health and environment. Numerous studies have shown that even urban use can cause increased rates of cancer, and harm to our neurological, reproductive, and immune systems.

And we've been delighted to find that this harm is just not necessary, with the wonderful alternatives available.

## Pesticides & Cancer

Did you know that:

■ **The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) considers as potentially cancer-causing** 90% of fungicides, 60% of herbicides, and 30% of insecticides.<sup>1</sup>

■ **Many studies have shown correlations between pesticide exposure and cancer.** For instance, a large study found that home pesticide use can more than double the chance of a child developing neuroblastoma (which is about 10% of all childhood tumors).<sup>2</sup> Another study showed that children with non-Hodgkins lymphoma were three times more likely to have been exposed to a professional exterminator service at home than matched controls.<sup>3</sup>

■ A National Cancer Institute study found that **dogs exposed to the common lawn-care herbicide 2, 4-D died from cancer at twice the normal rates.**

■ A National Academy of Sciences report estimated that pesticides just in food could **cause 20,000 added cancer cases** each year in America. This is **1.4 million added cancer cases during an average lifetime** (70 years).<sup>4</sup> This conservative estimate doesn't include cancer from the many other pesticide exposure routes.

**Think of all the costs and ripples of suffering each cancer case brings.** Then think of the increased happiness if we can avoid cancer in the first place. **This is true cancer prevention!**

Footnotes: See < [www.ci.sebastopol.ca.us](http://www.ci.sebastopol.ca.us) >

We're delighted to offer our services to help alert others to these potential threats to their well-being – and the easy ways to avoid them. And we're grateful that the City Council in creating STEP has cared so deeply and been so forward-thinking about the true best interest of our community and its citizens.

■ **STEP costs the City almost nothing.** With volunteers contributing their efforts and no postage costs, the only direct costs to the City are copying costs (on the City's machine) and about \$60 a year in miscellaneous costs. In Sebastopol's \$4.5 million annual budget, this is literally a tiny drop in the bucket – and a bargain for our health, now and long into the future.

## Herbicide Jeopardizes Composting

On Feb. 21, the Press Democrat reported that the herbicide **clopyralid** survives composting and has been found in municipal compost – including Sonoma County's. Clopyralid is used in “weed-and-feed” lawn and landscaping products to kill dandelions, clover, and other broadleaf plants. In compost, it can harm plants like tomatoes, peas, beans, sunflowers, and daisies.

The news is frustrating to those who value composting as a way to reuse plant material, reduce landfill waste, and nurture plants without the toxics often found in commercial fertilizers. (For more on the latter issue, see < [www.watoxics.org/tf.htm](http://www.watoxics.org/tf.htm) >.)

Numerous organizations have initiated action to resolve this issue.

- The **California Compost Coalition** (CCC) was formed and worked with regulators to develop legislation to restrict clopyralid's use in California (AB2356).
- Representatives from Sonoma Compost, Grab 'n' Grow, and others encouraged the **Sebastopol City Council** to write a letter supporting AB2356 and ask the Board of Supervisors to ban clopyralid. The Council voted 5-0 to support both actions. And,
- The **California Department of Pesticide Regulation** (DPR) announced that it will begin cancellation action against *some* clopyralid herbicide products. The manufacturers could agree, appeal, or modify their labels.

**So what can you do?** Read product labels to know if you're using clopyralid. Be sure neither you nor your landscaper uses clopyralid-pesticides on plants that will be composted. Support the groups taking action, so the benefits of community compost can remain. (For the CCC's recommended actions, call Grab 'n' Grow at 575-7275.) And perhaps this is a good time to investigate making your own compost!

~ Patricia Dines

For more: < [www.pressdemocrat.com/local/news/21compost\\_b1.html](http://www.pressdemocrat.com/local/news/21compost_b1.html) > < [www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/pressrls/mar27.htm](http://www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/pressrls/mar27.htm) >.

## Got Mold?

Want a healthier solution for mold? Try tea tree oil – the essential oil of the Australian native *Melaleuca alternifolia*. Tea tree oil cleans fungus and bacteria, and makes surfaces resistant to mold and mildew.

I was skeptical about this, but we have a poorly-ventilated bathroom frequented by long-showering teens, and ten years of chlorine bleach cleaning and repainting hadn't really worked. (The room also has mildew-resistant paint.) The chlorine removed the new mold, but not the deeper stains, and actually seemed to “rough up” the surface for next week's mold crop.

With tea tree oil, you can leave a residue of the oil solution on the wall or tile after cleaning to inhibit mold. I can honestly say that, on our walls, it works better than bleach.

Tea tree oil costs \$8 or so for a little bottle (Whole Foods has it), but you only use two teaspoons at a time. Just put this in a spray bottle and shake:

2 teaspoons tea tree oil  
2 cups water



### 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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I find it handy to label the bottle with the name and recipe for future reference. Spray, then wipe the area with a damp rag, rinsing out any mold from the rag as you go. Don't rinse the surface. Test on porous surfaces to make sure there is no stain or ring.

Some folks don't like the tea tree smell, but it goes away in a day or so; the mold inhibition remains.

Tea tree oil is widely used in all kinds of antibacterial and health products, including toothpaste. Please research proper dilutions and recipes when using essential oils, as they're concentrated. And don't leave them where kids can get them!

~ Rebecca Dwan

Sources: [messybeast.com](http://messybeast.com); [betterbasics.com](http://betterbasics.com); [thursdayplantation.com](http://thursdayplantation.com)

## Beautifying Sebastopol

Sebastopol's **new Volunteer Program** has developed a variety of ways you or your group or business can help beautify Sebastopol! And those who help from now until the Centennial Celebration June 15 will be recognized at that event. For more info, call Sally Soufer at 823-8469.

You can also join STEP and Planting Earth Activation (PEA) in re-landscaping and beautifying Sebastopol. Our next volunteer days are **Sun, May 5th, June 2nd, and July 7,** from 12-4pm. Meet at the movie theatre downtown. Bring water to drink plus tools and a wheelbarrow if you have them. See you there!



### The Garden Corner

Most everything can be planted this time of year. Here are some ideas. **Food crops:** Corn, potatoes and all root crops, squash, melons, tomatoes, beans, cucumbers. **Flowers:** Calendula, marigolds, sunflowers, salvias. **Mulch** around plants to deter weeds, conserve water, build topsoil, and feed worms! For mulch, you can use straw, old leaves, or weeds you pull out. Remember – plants grow because compost happens.