Thank You For Your Feedback!

Thank you to all the Sebastopol residents who took the time to send in your STEP Survey 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?

■ 90% said that you find The Next STEP (TNS) newsletter helpful and interesting. Reader comments included: “Very,” “You are doing a great job!!” and “Keep on keeping on.”

■ Of those responding about pesticide use, 23% said that you use pesticides at home or work, a big drop from last year’s 39%. Of those using pesticides, 50% use just natural/nontoxic pesticides, 8% use synthetic/toxic products, and 42% use both.

■ We’re delighted that 75% of you said that this newsletter has helped you reduce or avoid the use of toxics, an increase from last year. That really makes our work feel worthwhile!

For instance, readers reported that our information has helped you properly dispose of “old medicines and toxics like paint,” skip using Roundup, and apply vinegar instead of toxic herbicides. It’s also helped you avoid toxics in sunblocks, dryer sheets, and Christmas trees — and manage “ants and garden pests.”

One reader said, “I learned how to control weeds naturally.” (Yay!) Another said, “I use vinegar for just about everything” (and it is indeed a handy material for many household uses).

Others said, “This information helps deter my mom from using pesticides,” and “Excellent replacements, great reminders.” Another expressed appreciation for the “moral support.” 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 for our 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!

“I really appreciate getting The Next STEP Newsletter with all the good information. And I appreciate that you are spreading the word about healthier choices for families and homes!”

— A STEP Reader

Easy Answers

■ You can get answers to some of your survey questions about toxics and alternatives via The STEP Online Index at www.healthyworld.org/STEPIndex.html. All our past issues are there. Just look up your desired subject to read what we’ve written on that topic. For instance, we have articles under these bolded words.

• Healthier housecleaning and gardening
• Less-toxic approaches to ants, snails, mosquitoes, fleas, weeds, poison oak, blackberries, rodents, and mold
• Methodologies that avoid toxics, like permaculture and IPM
• Evaluations of specific toxics, including Roundup and 2,4-D
• Evidence of human and pet health problems related to toxics, including pesticides

■ The next Sebastopol Toxics Collection Day is on Tuesday August 15, 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!

■ Please let us know if you have a toxics question, article idea, or success story!

Did You Know?

The Next STEP costs the City almost nothing. It’s a bonus for you, created entirely by volunteer efforts, and with no added postage expense. It costs about $165 a year plus in-house copying, which 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.
Choosing Safer Bouquets

Are you buying flowers for Mother’s Day, graduation, or home décor? Reduce the toxic exposure for yourself and others by seeking organic and “no pesticide” options. Unfortunately, mainstream flowers can be doused with toxic pesticides during growing and shipping, and regulations are less-protective than for food. Read our story, with more information and healthier local sources, by going to Flowers in the STEP Index.

You can also learn more about the reality of the global flower business in the book Flower Confidential by Amy Stewart, www.amystewart.com/books/flower-confidential.


Eating Your Weeds, Redux

In our prior issue, we described common “weeds” that have traditionally been eaten and used for healing. Sebastopol plant lover, seed saver, and Master Gardener Marilyn Madrone responded by sharing some of her current favorite wild salads with me. I was inspired just reading about her healthy treats!

She said, “At this writing, my salad is dandelion, chickweed, quinoa, and a European import called mâche — with shredded carrots and onion greens. Yesterday’s salad was a huge amount of tender dandelion greens with goat chevre, quinoa, dried cranberries, sunflower seeds, carrots and onion greens.” She added, “Dandelion is a best friend. One leaf of it and any of last evening’s foolish eating is forgotten.” Good to know!

She suggested that we explore these summer “weed” herbs, when their leaves are young:

- lamb’s quarters (a quinoa),
- pigweed (an amaranth).

To learn more about identifying and eating these plants, see: livescience.com/15322-healthiest-backyard-weeds.html and www.ediblewildfood.com/pigweed.aspx. Before eating any wild plant, always be sure that you’ve identified it right and understand any risks!