Thank You For Your Feedback!

Thank you to all the Sebastopol residents who took the time to send in your STEP Survey cards for our annual reader survey.

We appreciate hearing your thoughts about the newsletter, including how you use it and what articles you’d like to see in the future. We’re interested in what’s helpful to you! Plus, your participation supports this innovative and pioneering community project.

So, what were your responses?

- 96% said that you find The Next STEP (TNS) newsletter helpful and interesting. Reader comments included: “Keep up the good work!”, “Thank you!!”, and “Thank you for TNS!”
- Of those responding about pesticide use, 39% said that you use pesticides at home or work. Of those using pesticides, 70% use just natural/nontoxic pesticides, 4% use synthetic/toxic products, and 26% use both.
- We’re delighted that 83% 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 said that their information has helped you avoid toxics in candles and makeup; use alternatives for garden bugs; and less-toxically “[deal] with ants and household cleaning.” A number of readers reported that you’re now using vinegar on weeds, and one said, “We don’t use Roundup any more.” Yay!

One reader said, “It has helped me find solutions to issues I was researching,” and another that they appreciated our “many great suggestions.”

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

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!

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. Its small copying cost is a drop in the bucket of Sebastopol’s $19 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.
Protecting Your Apples From Codling Moths

A reader asked how to control apple (codling) moths without toxics. While certainly we can sometimes cut around the holes to salvage moth-damaged apples, at other times the apples are just too far gone.

Thankfully, there are nontoxic remedies, even for backyard trees.

What you can do

1) Identify if the apples on your trees have had codling moths. Did your apples have worm holes last year? Did they drop early and/or have holes that allowed rot? These are common codling moth signs.

2) If you’re planting new trees, consider early maturing varieties, to try to skip a generation of the moths. Also, semi-dwarf trees are easier to manage, which can help reduce moth issues.

3) Fertilize every spring, after you see leaves and flowers. Use organic compost or fertilizer.

4) Set pheromone traps to identify if and when you have a moth issue, and to capture moths. According to Harmony Farm Supply, Sebastopol usually gets three generations, hatching in approximately May, mid-July, and September.

Put a few traps up when trees are flowering and before petals fall. If those traps get 5 or 6 moths, put out more. Hang two or three in a large tree, at 6’ or higher. Replace when they’re full or by eight weeks. If neighbors have apple trees, it can help if they use these traps too!

5) Thin apples when they’re the size of a marble. Especially remove damaged fruit. Keep only two or three apples per fruit cluster. Avoid two fruits touching, which is a common larval entry point.

6) Dispose of infected fruit correctly. Don’t put them in your home compost or green can. Composting doesn’t destroy all of them! You can feed them right away to chickens or pigs. Or boil them for half an hour and keep submerged for two days. Or put them in a black plastic bag in the sun for a month (called solarization). Or put them in a bag in the black can.

7) Collect dropped fruit weekly. Dispose of unripe and damaged apples per Step 6.

8) If the issue remains, try caterpillar trunk traps. In August, cut corrugated cardboard in 4” tall strips. Wrap these snugly around tree trunks, with the corrugation running up and down (vertically) and the bottom at least 18” off the ground. Staple closed. Check between November and January to see if caterpillars have spun their cocoons underneath. If you find cocoons, gather and destroy the cardboard, per Step 6.

9) Bump it up a notch. If these approaches aren’t enough, consider buying Surround clay or botanical insecticides. Visit Harmony Farm Supply in Graton to discuss what you’ve tried and what options they suggest. You can also request their helpful moth information handout. You can also improve your results by learning about the moth lifecycle, so your actions can be timed to best interrupt their reproductive stages.

And I invite you to let me know what methods work best for you!

For more about these and other methods, see: www.pesticide.org/moths_codling • www.planetnatural.com/pest-problem-solver/tree-pests/codling-moth-control • www.arbico-organics.com/category/codling-moth-control.