

THE NEXT STEP *Toward a Healthier Future*

A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SEBASTOPOL TOXICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Nurturing Your Garden – Non-Toxically

Those of you with summer gardens are now enjoying the fruits (and vegetables) of your labors. It's harvest time! And, if you grew without toxic pesticides, you know the food you're harvesting is the freshest, least-toxic you can find. What a delightful bounty to enjoy!

So what can you do now to keep your garden healthy and happy, non-toxically? Here are some tips:

■ Plant cover crops.

After harvesting your crops (especially corn and tomatoes), plant a cover crop to naturally replace nitrogen, build topsoil, and reduce your need to buy compost and fertilizers next spring. Good seed choices are vetch and fava beans; buy them in bulk at stores like Frizelle-Enos and Harmony Farm Supply. A couple pounds covers 1,000 square feet.

To plant cover crops (also known as green compost) remove the old plant material, loosen the soil, plant the seeds, rake dirt over, then press down (say by putting a board and stepping on it). Water and keep moist and you should see plants coming up soon.

Then when your plants flower and are about to produce their seeds, turn them into the soil. After sitting for a few weeks, your newly-nourished soil will be ready for you to plant your next round of crops!

■ **Start building your compost piles** for next spring and summer.

For more information about using old plants, leaves, and kitchen scraps to make rich garden soil, look for compost books and websites, or call the Master Gardeners at 565-2608.

■ **Mulch.** Put leaf mulch or straw around your plants, starting with perennials, to save water, build your soil, and keep the ground around the plant warmer.

■ **Save your seeds.** Saving seeds lets you grow favorite plants again, help preserve rare plants, and be part of life's full cycle.

For some plants (like lettuce), just let the plant go to seed, put a bag over the tops, bend the plant, and shake the seeds into the bag.

Tomato seeds take a little more effort to save, as you need to break down the protective mold encasing the seed's outer layer.

To save tomato seeds, take an overripe tomato, and squeeze the juice and seeds into a jar. Place this outside in the shade, and let the

top mold over. Pour out the mold, and repeat this process three times. Then wash the seeds with water and dry them. Place them in a marked paper envelope, ready for the next season. Be sure to just save heirloom or open pollinated seeds, as hybrids are generally infertile.

■ **Plant your fall and winter gardens.** Now's a great time to seed-plant lettuce, carrots, leafy-greens, beets, radishes, and potatoes. The rains will soon take over the job of watering for you! The general rule is to plant a seed twice as deep as the



Come Plant With Us

Want to dig in the dirt and help beautify Sebastopol?

Join PEA (and STEP) in landscaping different pieces of city property. Everyone is welcome to these ongoing work-parties! Please bring water, a hat, and gloves – plus (if you have them) wheelbarrows and tools for moving and spreading mulch and compost.

Sun., Sept. 2nd. Noon-4pm, on Hayden Ave at Jewel Ave.

Sun., Oct. 7th. Noon-4pm, on Covert Ave. at Pleasant Hill Ave. North.

Mon., Oct. 8th. 9am-6pm, on Covert Ave. again. This will be a big day of work rejuvenating this roadside.



(shortest) width of the seed. A hardy winter lettuce variety is Black-seeded Simpson. Endive is a hardy green for this season also.

Also plant garlic cloves now, for harvesting bulbs in June. Plant cloves root-end down, about 4-6" apart, so they have room to develop large bulbs. Garlic provides a wonderful harvest in just a little space!

Want to learn more about keeping your garden lush without using toxic pesticides? Maile Arnold is offering a free 2-hour workshop in Sebastopol on 10/28, 1:30-3:30pm. More information is on our website; call 823-1153 to register. And the Petaluma adult education center is offering a 4-class series, "Growing Green: Sustainable Gardening Techniques for Everyone", starting 9/22. Call 778-4633 for more information.

~ Craig Litwin & Patricia Dines

Pesticides & Your Health

As numerous studies have shown, pesticides can make you, your family, even your pets, sick – potentially causing a wide range of problems in the neurological, immune, and reproductive systems, as well as cancer.

However, it can often be difficult to get an accurate diagnosis of pesticide-caused conditions. Many of the first symptoms of exposure can seem like other problems (the flu, “just a headache,” etc.), making people and even doctors dismiss them. And most health care practitioners (even those using complementary medicine) haven’t been trained to consider and diagnose pesticide exposure symptoms. As a result, you can be

misdiagnosed and mistreated – while the exposure and harm continues!

If you think pesticide exposure might be related to a health problem you’re having, mention this to your health professional. And help your health care provider recognize and treat pesticide problems by letting them know about two handy (and free!) resource books. (And you can use them to educate yourself!)

■ **Pesticides and Human Health: A Resource for Health Care Professionals**, by Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) and Californians for Pesticide Reform (CPR). California residents can get a free copy of this book through <www.igc.org/cpr> or by calling (888) CPR-4880.

■ **Recognition and Management of Pesticide Poisonings**, by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Get this free book by calling (800) 490-9198 and asking for order number EPA735R98003.

If your health professional believes pesticides caused your problem, **be sure they report it to Sonoma County’s Department of Health Services by calling 565-6565.** Most aren’t aware that this reporting is mandatory; as a result, there is serious under-reporting that discourages government action.

Also keep the **Emergency Poison Control number** handy for you and your family, in case of an emergency exposure (see box).

You can help **avoid health problems from pesticides and other toxics** by identifying those you and your family might be exposed to in your home, garden, work, or school. Remember to dispose of toxics at the next Toxics Pickup Day.

Here’s to your health!

~ Patricia Dines
(Thanks to Nan Fuchs for her input!)



**Emergency California
Poison Control Number
(800) 876-4766**

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.

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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Sticky Barriers

This is the time of year when ants and other insects may be seen crawling up your fruit trees and ornamentals for the ripening fruit, or to farm nectar from aphids.

Instead of spraying with poisons, you can stop them by putting a ring of sticky goo around the trunk of the tree or bush. Sold under a number of different brand-names, but often called Tanglefoot, it usually comes in a tube that looks like an oversized tube of toothpaste. It should say “nontoxic” on the label. Here’s how you use it:

■ First remove what ants or aphids you can with a water spray. (You can add a little biodegradable soap in the water to help kill any aphids.)

■ When the trunk is dry, smear on a one- to two-inch strip of goo anywhere below the first branches. Use a stick (a popsicle stick works great). If this tree is your favorite trunk to lean up against, put the strip above the leaning point.

■ Be sure that there are no avenues for ants to get around the goo. Even a single grass stalk, occasionally blowing and touching the tree, can serve as an ant detour.

■ Once a month or so, or any time after dust or grass clippings have been blowing around, come along with a stick to stir up the goo. Ensure that no dry material is sticking to it and acting as an ant bridge.

This goo is great stuff; it can last over a year as long as you check on it occasionally.

~ Rebecca Dwan

