

# THE NEXT STEP

*Toward a Healthier Future*

A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SEBASTOPOL TOXICS EDUCATION PROGRAM



## 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?

■ 88% said that you find *The Next STEP (TNS)* newsletter helpful and interesting.

■ Of those responding about pesticide use, 20% said you use pesticides at home or work, a big drop from prior years! Of those using pesticides, 50% use natural/nontoxic ones and 50% use both natural and synthetic ones.

■ We're delighted that 94% of you said that this newsletter has helped you reduce or avoid the use of toxics. That really makes our work feel worthwhile!

For instance, readers said that our information has helped you avoid toxics in housecleaning, snail

abatement, ant management, and eliminating weeds. One reader said that there were "so many examples" of how we've helped them reduce toxics. Yay!

Another reader said that STEP "always makes one think! Thank you!" And another reader asked us to continue offering "more of the same."

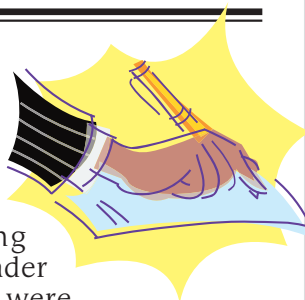
**Congratulations to everyone who's finding ways to reduce or avoid using toxics. With these choices, you're supporting a healthier and safer water supply, town, and environment for yourself, your family, and our community. What we do in our daily lives really does help to create our world!**

**Also thank you for your questions;** 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, tips, and toxics questions coming!** Your input helps us create a newsletter that's useful for you!

**Tell a friend about STEP!** We offer helpful well-researched information for healthier less-toxic living. **Anyone can get this newsletter by email for free! Or browse our past issues online by topic!** See [www.healthyworld.org/STEP](http://www.healthyworld.org/STEP).



## Easy Answers

■ You can get answers to some of your survey questions about toxics and alternatives with **The STEP Online Index**, via [www.healthyworld.org/STEP](http://www.healthyworld.org/STEP). 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.

- Less-toxic approaches to **weeds, ants, snails, earwigs, fleas, weeds, rodents, poison oak, and whiteflies**
- Healthier products for **gardening, painting, housecleaning, and home repair**
- Evaluations of specific toxics, including **Roundup** and **2,4-D**
- Evidence of human and pet **health problems related to toxics, including pesticides**

■ One reader wanted a copy of the **clothes dryer sheets article**, to share with a neighbor. It's easy to find that via our Online Index, under **Dryer sheets!**

■ Another reader suggested a **toxic waste dropoff**, where "people can donate their partially used products" for others to reuse. The good news is ... **that already exists in Sonoma County!** When you drop off items at our local Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Facility, items such as paints, stains, and cleaning products are put in a locker that anyone can access — for free! More information is on the Zero Waste Sonoma website (over).

### 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 \$20 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.

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"I've been perusing STEP's back issues. They're really nicely done. I've written newsletters for water bill inserts before, and it's a lot of work! Really a great service. :)"

~ Pat Collins

## Clean Showers & Tubs

A reader asked “**how to remove mineral and mold buildup around showers and tubs.**”

### Reading Our Past Articles

To read our past articles on this very topic, just **look in the STEP Online Index** under each of these **key words**.

■ **Mold.** The first link (II/3) describes how to use **tea tree oil** to both clean and discourage mold in bathrooms. The second link (III/6) discusses how to address **mold overall**. And the third link (IV/1) offers **more mold remedies**.

■ **Housecleaning.** Click on VII/2 (**porcelain**) to learn about **less-toxic cleaning of sinks, tubs, and toilets** — both for everyday cleaning and stronger. And click on XXI/1 for a bonus tip!

### Mineral Buildup Remedies

**Mineral buildup likely comes from hard water**, which is quite common around here! Some tips:

■ **Spray the desired area with white vinegar**, let it soak for 15 minutes, then wipe.

■ **Scrub** with baking soda, borax, Bon Ami, or Bar Keepers Friend plus a brush, scrubby sponge, or old toothbrush. Or scrub with a paste made with one of these powders plus vinegar. Wait a bit then rinse.

■ **Address this early and often**, before it gets too embedded.

■ **Be cautious with more abrasive cleansers and materials**, which can scratch surfaces and make minerals deposit faster.

■ **Consider buying** a water softener, to better protect appliances.

**For more tips and ideas**, see this article (but skip the two cleaning brand recommendations) <https://bit.ly/2QpQNW3>.

## Nail Polishing Tip

You might know that **mainstream nail polishes contain serious toxics** such as toluene, dibutyl phthalate, and formaldehyde. We can be exposed to these chemicals even after the polish is dry. And they can make our nails brittle!

**There are less-toxic nail polishes**, so please investigate those if you love wearing nail polish.

However, **I was delighted to find something that works even better for me. It's a four-sided filing block** that quickly **polished my nails so shiny** that a friend thought I had clear nail polish on!

I start by shaping my nail tips with my metal nail file. Then I use the block to quickly buff my nail surfaces, using these sides in order: coarse, remove ridges, smooth, then shine. It works surprisingly fast! (So don't sand too hard or too often, to avoid weakening nails.)

I got my handy buffing block at Andy's, and there are various options online. See more usage tips at <https://bit.ly/3asxToo>.

## Safer Cooking with Gas

For so long, (natural) **gas stoves have been the choice of chefs**, including home chefs, because of their quicker cooking times and more precise temperature controls.

But now it turns out that **their gas combustion can actually**

**“Patricia has her finger on the pulse and always delivers relevant and necessary content.”**  
~ A STEP Reader

## Local Toxics Disposal

■ **To discard your household toxics safely, bring them to the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Facility.** It's at 500 Meham Road, between Cotati and Petaluma, and is open Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, 7:30am to 2:30pm.

■ **Check the Zero Waste Sonoma website** ([www.zerowastesonoma.gov](http://www.zerowastesonoma.gov)) for more information on this, or to see what city HHW Collection Events are currently scheduled. Or call 707/565-3375 or 707/364-6927.

**put toxics into our home air**, including carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen dioxide, and formaldehyde. Researchers have repeatedly found links between gas cooking and higher rates of respiratory illness, including in children. Oh no!

### What Can You Do?

■ **If your stove has an overhead fan**, confirm that it vents outside. Or cook with a ceiling fan on and open windows or doors for air flow.

■ **Ventilate every time you cook.** Turn on the fan before you turn on the burners, then run it while cooking and for 10 minutes afterwards.

■ **Cook on back burners when possible**, as overhead fans usually draw better from there.

■ **Evaluate your fan.** Buy or borrow an air quality meter that measures PM 2.5 and CO. With the stove and fan on, see if the air near the stove is safe (in the green zone).

■ **Have an expert check your stove setup and emissions.**

■ **Consider getting a new range hood and fan**, to increase air pull (CFM) and/or reduce noise.

For more, see <https://bit.ly/3sEKnrz>.

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 • **Got a pest problem?** •  
 • **Or a toxics question?** •  
 • The STEP Online Index can •  
 • help! [www.healthyworld.org/STEP](http://www.healthyworld.org/STEP) •  
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### ABOUT STEP

The Next STEP (TNS) is published six times a year by the **Sebastopol Toxics Education Program (STEP)**. STEP is a project of the City of Sebastopol, implemented by local citizen volunteers. **STEP's mission** is to support city residents in reducing their toxic use and exposure, creating a healthier and safer Sebastopol for everyone.

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Printed on recycled paper.