

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?

■ **96% said that you find *The Next STEP (TNS)* newsletter helpful and interesting.** Reader comments included: "**Yes!**", "I love it!", and "Thank you!"

■ **Of those responding about pesticide use, 35% said that you use pesticides at home or work. Of those using pesticides, 56% use just natural/nontoxic pesticides, 11% use synthetic/toxic products, and 33% use both.**

■ **We're delighted that 74% 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 we've helped you avoid or reduce your use of toxics in your yard maintenance, blackberry/poison oak removal, and ant management. Another reader found our information on artificial sweeteners helpful. And another reader appreciated that we let them know that alternatives to

toxic products are available.

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 and ideas for future articles; you'll find answers 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!

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"I'm a longtime Sebastopol resident and **have been reading *The Next STEP* since it first came out.**

I love it! Each issue has timely and interesting topics that I hadn't even considered.

And it offers thoughtful and easy-to-execute recommendations for reducing the toxics in my home & garden.

Just keep them coming!"

~ Ryn Longmaid

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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.** All of 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 listed under these **bolded** words.

• **Healthier beauty products, housecleaning, gardening, painting, and home repair**

• **Less-toxic approaches to weeds, ants, snails, earwigs, fleas, weeds, rodents, poison oak, and whiteflies**

• **Evaluations of specific toxics, including Roundup and 2,4-D**

• **Evidence of human and pet health problems related to toxics, including pesticides**

• **Methodologies that avoid toxics, like permaculture and IPM**

■ **Anyone can get the STEP newsletter by email.** Sign up at www.healthyworld.org/STEP. Feel free to share this with others!

■ **The next Sebastopol Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Collection Event is Sept. 19,** from 4 to 8pm. To make an appointment, at least 24 hours beforehand, call 707/795-2025 or 877/747-1870; go to www.bit.ly/41sIoQV; or email toxicsdisposal@cleanharbors.com.

■ **For more about local toxics disposal,** including the HHW facility, see www.zerowastesonoma.gov or call 707/565-3375.

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 \$25 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.

Digging Deeper

■ **Tackling ants!** Ants were a common survey topic, with people both using pesticides for them and wanting non-toxic options.

I have good news! Over the years, I tested many claimed natural remedies, saw what worked, and developed an easy less-toxic process that reliably keeps ants out. It even worked for someone who wanted to keep ants from his outdoor hot tub! See our *STEP Index* under **Ants**.

■ **Healthier housecleaning.** A reader asked us to “name the brands that are okay to use around the house/kitchen/bathroom.”

We have articles on a wide variety of specific remedies. Just look in the *Index* under your desired topic, such as **Healthier housecleaning**.

Also helpful is the **free searchable product database from the Environmental Working Group** at www.ewg.org/guides/cleaners.

■ **Whiteflies and codling moths.** A reader requested help addressing whiteflies on houseplants, and another with codling moths in apple trees (the proverbial worm in the apple). You can find useful information in our *Index*, under **Whiteflies** and **Apple trees**.

■ **Sluggo for slugs?** A reader asked about Sluggo, a bait used to kill slugs and snails that’s perhaps less-toxic than metaldehyde baits.

However, there are concerns about Sluggo. First, 99% of the

product is hidden under “inert ingredients.” Despite the name, this category can include toxics! And these can be ignored in the regulation process.

Also, there are reports of Sluggo harming dogs, earthworms, and soil microfauna.

Studies of these issues weren’t required, so it’s hard to speak definitively. **Personally, I see Sluggo as possibly risky and don’t use it.** To learn more about the risks, see the links below. For safer approaches, see the *Index* under **Snails**.

If you do use Sluggo, learn the issues, follow directions, use only small amounts, store securely, and possibly keep dogs out of the area.

SOURCES: www.bit.ly/41NtpB2 • www.bit.ly/3L4vwcP • www.bit.ly/3V3luxh • www.bit.ly/2U1YRfz

Behind the News

Train Wrecks and Toxic Harm

The **Ohio train derailment** and toxic release in Feb. underscored the need for better regulation of toxic transportation. It also reinforced one of my themes: that accidents are not surprising but common, and part of the full cost of using toxics.

Years ago, **I developed my Five Phases of Toxic Harm model**, noting these stages where toxics can cause harm in their lifecycle: Extraction/Production, Transportation, Application, Storage/Disposal, and Emergency Events. **These risks are very real to the people involuntarily (and often invisibly) harmed.** Including sometimes us!

So when we use toxics, or buy products made using toxics, we’re not separate from the harm they can do in all phases of their journey.

And also — when we choose less-toxic products, we reduce the exposure and harm not just to ourselves but to everything on that product’s path. For more, see the *Index* under **Lifecycle**.

California’s New Pesticide Reduction Plan

In January, California state released *The Sustainable Pest Management Roadmap for California*. **Its key two goals for 2050 are:** Sustainable pest management becomes the de facto management system in California, and California eliminates the use of certain high-risk pesticides. The plan seeks to “better protect the health of our communities and environment” while supporting agriculture and food systems.

It’s encouraging to see these positive goals stated. Plus this roadmap was developed by a diverse group of stakeholders, representing conventional and organic agriculture, community and environmental groups, urban perspectives, tribes, researchers, and government.

Still, the word “sustainable” can mean a range of things. How this is implemented will be key.

I hope that we can find ways to support this process in producing serious reductions in our toxic use and exposure, and cultivating healthier less-toxic options and futures for us all.

SOURCE: www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/pressrls/2023/012623.htm

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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“My husband Dan and I have changed our purchasing habits at home — several times! — based upon information and suggestions in the STEP newsletter. We know other people have benefitted from its material too.

We’re grateful for the long volunteer effort, by Patricia Dines and team, to help us become more aware of the consequences on the environment of our everyday choices.”

~ Sarah Gurney

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 • **Got a pest problem?** •
 • **Or a toxics question?** •
 • **The STEP Online Index can help!** It’s easy to look up your topic •
 • and find our well-researched, condensed, and useful information •
 • — to help you get up-to-speed •
 • and into action. It also makes it •
 • easy to share this information! •
 • Plus you and others can get on •
 • our low-volume email list, to hear •
 • when new issues are online. •
 • **www.healthyworld.org/STEP** •
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