



# THE NEXT STEP Toward a Healthier Future

A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SEBASTOPOL TOXICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

## Detoxing Your Holidays

Our past issues have described various ways that you can avoid toxics over the holidays, thus creating a healthier home and environment for your loved ones and community — and perhaps gently sharing your path with others.

To give you a taste, here are some of the tips we've discussed. To get more specifics on what to avoid, what to choose, and why, see the *STEP Online Index* at [www.healthyworld.org/STEPIndex.html](http://www.healthyworld.org/STEPIndex.html). Scroll to **Holidays**, and any other topics of interest, or use your browser's search feature. I also have more fun ideas at [www.askecogirl.info/AEThemeGreenHolidays.html](http://www.askecogirl.info/AEThemeGreenHolidays.html).

■ **CLEAN.** Wash your home (and unclog your drain) with less-toxic materials. Freshen your air with natural not synthetic scents. Manage ants and mold without toxics. Create a sweet sign inviting folks to remove their shoes at the door. Label your discard system so that it's easy for guests to use.

■ **LANDSCAPE.** Cut back your dormant blackberries, then disrupt future growth by pouring vinegar on their roots, instead of a toxic.

■ **DECORATE.** Bring the beauty of nature's bounty inside. Avoid spray snow; cut out paper snowflakes instead. Keep pets safe by skipping toxics in the Christmas tree water. Get a live potted holiday tree, then plant it outside afterwards.

■ **COOK.** Bake with natural not synthetic food dyes, and serve local organic food.

■ **GIVE.** Look for less-toxic gifts and helpful books — to share alternatives and help protect your giftees' well-being.

■ **WRAP.** Choose wrapping paper that's recycled and chlorine free. Avoid metal ones that can't be recycled. Or reuse leftover gift paper, magazines, fabric, and more.

■ **ENTERTAIN.** Gather to watch eco-movies and documentaries.

■ **DISCARD.** Don't burn wrapping paper in the fireplace; it can contain toxics and cause flash fires. Reuse or recycle instead. Dispose of techno-toys responsibly.

## California Bans the Sale of Microbeads, Starting 2020

We've previously discussed the harm of plastic microbeads, which are added for color and scrubbing action in health and beauty products such as toothpaste and body wash.

Unfortunately, these tiny never-biodegrading plastics pass through wastewater treatment systems into our environment. There they can pollute our precious water, soak up toxics, appear as food to wildlife, harm creatures and ecosystems, bioaccumulate up the food chain, risk appearing on our dinner plates, and remain as persistent pollutants.

Roughly 300 tons of these plastics go into U.S. waterways each year. California alone discharges 38 tons. Worse, there is no need for them, as natural options are available. For more on this, see the *STEP Online Index* under **Microbeads**.

So I was delighted to see California recently pass one of the country's strongest bans on the sale of personal care products containing microbeads. Supporting this legislation were more than 75 California environmental and health advocacy organizations, clean water agencies, and green businesses. Because our state constitutes about an eighth of the U.S. market for personal care products, this

legislation will likely change product ingredients throughout the country.

"We're obviously incredibly excited," says Stiv Wilson, of the (non-profit) Story of Stuff Project.

Anna Cummins, Executive Director of 5 Gyres Institute, says that this bill "will eliminate a significant source of plastic pollution at the source, before it ever has a chance to reach the oceans."

Note that the ban doesn't go into effect until January 1, 2020, four years from now, so we still need to check personal care product labels, and skip those with "microbeads," "polyethylene," or "polypropylene."

*SOURCES:* [www.nytimes.com/2015/10/09/business/california-bans-plastic-microbeads.html?\\_r=3](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/09/business/california-bans-plastic-microbeads.html?_r=3) • [www.motherjones.com/blue-marble/2015/09/california-about-ban-those-little-pieces-plastic-your-toothpaste-face-scrub](http://www.motherjones.com/blue-marble/2015/09/california-about-ban-those-little-pieces-plastic-your-toothpaste-face-scrub) • [www.ecowatch.com/2015/09/08/california-senate-microbeads](http://www.ecowatch.com/2015/09/08/california-senate-microbeads)

## California Plans to List Roundup's Glyphosate As a Carcinogen

California's Environmental Protection Agency has announced its intent to list glyphosate as a known cause of cancer.

Dr. Nathan Donley of the Center for Biological Diversity says, "California's taking an important step toward protecting people and wildlife from this toxic pesticide.... As far as I'm aware, this is the first regulatory agency within the U.S. to determine

See *California*, over



## Local Toxics Disposal

■ **Two key ways to safely discard your toxics** are available through the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency (SCWMA).

• **Community Collections Days**, which are held at various spots around the County. **The next Sebastopol one is Tues. Dec. 8**, from 4 to 8pm. To make an appointment, call 707/795-2025 or 877/747-1870 at least 24 hours ahead. They'll tell you that day's location.

• **The Sonoma County Household Toxics Facility**, which is located at the Central Disposal Site (aka the dump, between Cotati and Petaluma). It's open Thurs. through Sat., 7:30am to 2:30pm. No appointment is needed. (Note: It's closed from Dec. 19 to Jan. 2.)

Drop-off via both of these is free to Sonoma County residents with ID.

■ **Free battery disposal in Sebastopol.** You can also discard your used household batteries for free at *Sebastopol Hardware* (660 Gravenstein Hwy N).

Plus, the City of Sebastopol hosts three free battery drop-off points for Sebastopol residents: *City Hall* (7120 Bodega Ave.), *the Sebastopol Library* (7140 Bodega Ave.), and *the Fire Department* (7425 Bodega Ave.).

All these locations accept household alkaline batteries (AA, AAA, C, D, 9-volt) plus buttons and rechargables. You can bring most batteries loose; Sebastopol Hardware does ask that 9-volt plug ends be taped.

■ **Discarding paints, stains, and fluorescent bulbs.** *Sebastopol Hardware* will also accept your paint and stain discards for free (in sealed not leaking containers). The store offers this as part of the PaintCare program ([www.paintcare.org/calif](http://www.paintcare.org/calif)

*ornia*), which is funded by fees collected when we purchase paint.

The store also receives fluorescent bulbs, for a small fee. (Curly CFL bulbs are 75¢; tubes two to four feet are \$1; and longer tubes are \$2.)

■ **Safe disposal of pharmaceuticals.** Non-controlled substances can be dropped at the *Sebastopol Police Station* (6850 Laguna Park Way).

■ **You can learn more about identifying toxics, discarding them, and finding alternatives** via the *STEP Online Index* at [www.healthyworld.org/STEPIndex.html](http://www.healthyworld.org/STEPIndex.html).

■ **Also find out more about what toxics to discard and where via the SCWMA** at [www.recyclenow.org](http://www.recyclenow.org) or 707/565-3375. This site also has information about passing along items for reuse, such as styrofoam packing "peanuts," tools, bikes, craft supplies, books, cell phones, corks, and eyeglasses.

### California, continued

that glyphosate is a carcinogen. So this is a very big deal."

Glyphosate is the world's most widely used herbicide, with 1.4 billion pounds applied annually. It's the main ingredient in Roundup, which is commonly used on lawns and crops — and brings maker Monsanto \$2 billion a year. According to the Center for Biological Diversity, glyphosate sales are at an all-time high, largely due to its use on crops that have been genetically modified to withstand higher doses of this toxic (Roundup Ready GMOs).

Under California's Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986 (Proposition 65), the state is required to list and publish chemicals that cause cancer, birth defects, or other reproductive harm. Businesses then must warn people before exposure to chemicals on the list. This might be done via consumer product labels, workplace postings, or notices at apartment buildings.

One prompt for a Prop. 65 listing can be a listing by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), a branch of the World Health Organization (WHO). In March, the

IARC released a report that found glyphosate to be a "probable carcinogen." It reached this conclusion based on human, animal, and cell studies that found glyphosate connected to non-Hodgkin lymphoma, chromosomal damage in cells, and tumor formation. Studies have also linked Roundup to kidney disease, hormone disruption, and antibiotic resistance. Plus its use has been tied to declining populations of Monarch butterflies.

We're all being widely exposed to glyphosate. Studies have found it in all humans tested (at significant levels), 90% of soybeans, the majority of waterways, and 70% of rainfall.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is reviewing its approved uses of glyphosate and plans to release a preliminary assessment of the human health risk later this year. It's expected to include new restrictions. Sri Lanka and El Salvador have banned glyphosate, France has ceased over-the-counter sales, and Mexico and the Netherlands have imposed new restrictions. Monsanto maintains that glyphosate and Roundup are safe for human health when used as labelled.

SOURCES: [www.ecowatch.com/2015/09/16/glyphosate-linked-to-cancer](http://www.ecowatch.com/2015/09/16/glyphosate-linked-to-cancer) • <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/04/150422-glyphosate-roundup-herbicide-weeds> • [www.mintpressnews.com/monsanto-stunned-california-confirms-roundup-will-be-labeled-cancer-causing/209513](http://www.mintpressnews.com/monsanto-stunned-california-confirms-roundup-will-be-labeled-cancer-causing/209513) • [www.beyond-gm.org/new-diy-testing-shows-your-body-burden-of-glyphosate](http://www.beyond-gm.org/new-diy-testing-shows-your-body-burden-of-glyphosate)

"Some day we shall look back on this dark era of agriculture and shake our heads. How could we have ever believed that it was a good idea to grow our food with poisons?"

Jane Goodall, *Harvest for Hope: A Guide to Mindful Eating*

## 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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