

THE NEXT STEP

Toward a Healthier Future

A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SEBASTOPOL TOXICS EDUCATION PROGRAM



Local Good News!

I've been delighted to see **local governments reducing their use of toxic pesticides** in public spaces, including halting use of glyphosate-based herbicides such as Roundup.

Through this, **they're making these areas safer and healthier** for residents, families, children, workers, pets, wildlife, water supplies, and ecosystems.

The City of Sebastopol helped pioneer this path in 2000, when it committed to *skipping all toxic pesticides* in City spaces such as parks. (It's used its exception option only twice since then.) The City wanted to encourage citizens to reduce their toxic use and exposure too, and thus co-created this STEP newsletter.

So it's great to see more governments joining this bandwagon. And I appreciate all the people and groups making this possible with their encouragement and support. May we continue to do more of the same!

The City of Santa Rosa

There was little fanfare this August 21 when the **Santa Rosa City Council voted unanimously** to ap-

prove a contract with its landscape contractor, Golden Gate Landscape Management (GGLM), that required GGLM to use only OMRI

(*organic certified*) herbicides in managing the City's parks, median strips, and more. This means that they won't be using glyphosate-based Roundup or other synthetic herbicides there!

The City publicly signalled this plan in 2017, when it invited landscaping service bids that swapped common chemical products for less-toxic approaches. (For more about the City's choice and reasons, see our Online Index, under **Sonoma County Activities**, Issue XVII/5.)

Encouraging Santa Rosa on this path has been a three-year campaign by local groups and individuals, with key leadership from Sonoma County Conservation Action (SCCA) and its Toxic Free Future campaign. Local parent and environmental engineer Megan Kaun has also been passionately advocating for removing toxic pesticides from our local public spaces. She brought this issue to the SCCA and is now on its board.

Another SCCA board member, Anne Seeley, called Santa Rosa's choice "fantastic." She considers toxic herbicides "dangerous" and "inappropriate to be sprayed on areas where children [and] pets play."

Other Santa Rosa entities are also reducing their pesticide use. For instance, since 2015 the **Santa Rosa Water Agency** has directed its contractor to manage its "urban" lands with *only OMRI herbicides*. And **Santa Rosa City Schools** have *banned all pesticides that might cause cancer* (such as Roundup) and *use only OMRI herbicides* in their 25 campuses.

See **Local**, over



It's Our Birthday!!

With this issue, we're celebrating **18 years of publishing *The Next STEP* (TNS)!**

Our goal with this innovative City project is to nurture a healthier Sebastopol for everyone by reducing our exposure to toxics.

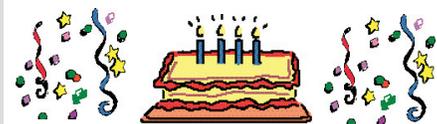
Thus, we help folks reduce the toxics in all areas of our lives — including our homes, schools, businesses, parks, food, and environment.

TNS is produced by a small team of local citizens, working on a volunteer basis (which keeps costs very low) because we support this goal. We're grateful to the City Council and staff for acting in the community's best interest with this project.

Now we need your help! Please fill out the enclosed survey card to give us your feedback about our efforts.

Also let us know how we can best support your toxics reduction in the coming year, including any questions, tips, story ideas, or success stories. (The Feedback card is also in the City's online bill paying system.)

We want to hear from you! Your support makes this project possible. Thank you!



Did You Know?

***The Next STEP* costs the City almost nothing.** Created entirely by volunteer efforts, and with no added postage expense, its primary cost is copying. This is literally 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.



Local, continued

The City of Windsor

The good news continued on Sept. 5 when the **Windsor Town Council voted unanimously** to *ban all synthetic pesticides* in town-owned property like parks and trails.

This decision was the result of over a year of work, initiated by a concerned Windsor parent who reached out to SCCA for help. SCCA in turn partnered with other local citizens and groups on this cause.

Elsewhere in Sonoma County

Other local spots are becoming healthier. For example, **Petaluma City Schools** *banned glyphosate-based herbicides* in December 2015. **The City of Petaluma** *skips synthetic weedkillers* except on its median strips. **The City of Healdsburg** *hasn't used glyphosate* in its City parks, playgrounds, public areas, or landscaped medians since 2017. And the **Sebastopol Union School District** *doesn't use synthetic herbicides.*

What's Next

This reduction of public toxics is happening because people are

* **OMRI** products are independently certified for use in organic farming. www.omri.org

* **Pesticides** are materials used to kill various "pests." **Herbicides** are pesticides used to kill plants.

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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standing up for safer community spaces — and some government agencies are being receptive.

But, as Kaun says, "This story is far from over." **Many municipalities are still spraying toxic pesticides** on our shared land. Even those that remove one toxic category can still be using other ones!

So ask your schools and parks what pesticides they're using. If any are toxic, encourage them to replace these with healthier options.

Also, SCCA is encouraging **Rohnert Park** to *ban all synthetic pesticides*. This is expected to be on their Council agenda in January or February. To sign the online petition, go to <https://bit.ly/2Ex8hIm>.

Kaun says that SCCA's goal is to "get toxics out of all public land in Sonoma County," including schools and parks. She adds, "**It is clear that the public does not want synthetic pesticides used** near where they live, work, and play."

For more information and action resources, see: www.conservationaction.org/news/toxicfree • www.sonomacountygazette.com/sonoma-county-news/pernicious-pesticides-hiding-in-plain-sight-april-2017 • and www.madelocalmagazine.com/2017/11/no-spray-zone.

Also look in our Online Index under **Roundup** and the **California Healthy Schools Act** (which helps you protect your child at school).

SOURCES: "Santa Rosa bans use of Roundup at parks," Aug. 21, 2018, www.pressdemocrat.com/news/local/8657806-181/santa-rosa-bans-use-of • www.conservationaction.org/town-windsor-bans-synthetic-pesticides • *Conversations with primary sources*

Local Toxics Disposal

■ **The next Sebastopol Toxics Collections Days are Tues. Jan. 8 and April 9**, from 4 to 8pm. To make an appointment, call 707/795-2025 or 877/747-1870 at least 24 hours ahead. You can also drop items at the Household Toxics Facility.

■ **For more about local toxics disposal**, see www.recyclenow.org or call 707/565-3375.

Got a pest problem? Or a toxics question?

The STEP Online Index can help! It makes it easy to look up your topic of interest 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!

For instance, you might want to check out these timely topics: (Healthier)

Housecleaning, Mildew & Mold, Drain declogging, Ant management, Rodents, Houseplant care, Art supplies, e-waste (for proper disposal of your tech discards), Pet care, Health and environmental impacts of toxics, (Protecting) Children, and Movies (for fun shared learning).

www.healthyworld.org/STEP

Removing Paint Spatters

I recently wanted an easy least-toxic way to **remove old paint spatters from my outdoor vinyl window frames**. Diving into the Internet, I learned that the challenge was finding something effective that wouldn't damage the vinyl. After trying various options (including some stronger products that didn't work), I found one that worked well ... rubbing (or isopropyl) alcohol!

I just wet a clean smooth rag with the rubbing alcohol, then rub the paint off. For thicker paint spatters, I wrap the rag around a plastic putty knife and lift the paint gently. (Without the rag, the knife lifts the vinyl too.) I finish with a damp rag, to remove any excess. Ta dah!

Before doing this on your windows, test it in an inconspicuous spot, to see what works for you!

"I always enjoy your Next STEP newsletter, and the new issue is no exception. Thanks especially for all the new-to-me information about candles."

~ Carol Goodwin Blick