



The City of Sebastopol community newsletter is one way to stay in touch with what's going on in Sebastopol. Our web site, CityofSebastopol.org is another. It is chock-full of information on City services, public meetings, and community resources. Or, stop by City offices any time we are open!

Housing Action Plan

Addressing housing issues is a high priority for the City Council. The Council formed a Housing Subcommittee which is having a series of community forums that will lead to a housing action plan for consideration of the City Council.

Should zoning or development standards be changed? Should the City propose a new tax to generate revenues for affordable housing? How should the City address the topic of rent control? These and other issues will be discussed. All meetings are at Park Side School, from 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm.

Location: Park Side School Multi-Purpose Room, 7450 Bodega Avenue, MPR Accessed from Washington Avenue.

May 8, 2017, May 22, 2017, June 12, 2017

Cut Down on Your Paperwork!



You can now pay your water and sewer bill online!

Sebastopol offers online bill payment for water and sewer services. The system uses a secure, cloud-based, off-site portal where you can log in, check your bills, make a payment or sign up for Auto Pay with your Credit or Debit card. See more information at: <http://ci.sebastopol.ca.us/Billpay.aspx>

City Strikes Deal with Airbnb for Collection of Transient Occupancy Tax



The City Council has approved an agreement with Airbnb to automatically collect Transient Occupancy Taxes from Airbnb operators. These businesses also need to comply with Zoning regulations, and obtain a Business License.

The new agreement will help ensure that these home businesses, as well as visitors, help pay for the cost of City services.

SEBASTOPOL HAS UPDATED ITS 'GRANNY UNIT' STANDARDS. FEES AND REQUIREMENTS HAVE BEEN REDUCED! CHECK OUT THE NEW ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT GUIDELINES ON THE CITY WEB SITE.

Preparedness

It is important to focus on how to be better prepared to cope with disasters. As we have seen with a number of major disasters, it is very important that each household prepares to make it on its own for at least the first 72 hours of a disaster.

While the City of Sebastopol has an emergency operations plan, the first priority is to take immediate action to save and protect life, and secondarily to start the general response process. For example, in a significant earthquake, restoration of power or water may not occur for days or weeks. In Sebastopol, we understand well that disasters can strike. History has shown that we are prone to devastating earthquakes, seasonal floods, severe winter storms and large wildland fires.

The good news is that you can be prepared to handle these emergencies. In order to prepare, there are several things that you must do:

- Provide a minimum of one gallon of water, per day, per person, for at least three days.
- Stockpile a non-perishable food supply for all members of your family, including pets.
- Provide extra supplies for a relative, friend, or neighbor who may need your help.
- Consider maintaining a supply of emergency medicines and cash in a secure location.
- Pre-designate a local meeting place for your family to meet after a disaster.
- Agree on an out-of-area friend or relative phone number that household members can call to update their status in an emergency situation.
- Know how to turn off the electricity, gas and water to your home.
- Stockpile basic first aid supplies and attend a basic first aid class.
- Have a flashlight, battery-powered radio, and extra batteries.
- Have some supplies in your car, in case you are not home when the disaster hits.
- Include your pets in your disaster plan.
- Review your insurance coverage for each of the potential threats.



For more detailed information, you can contact the Fire Department at 823-8061, or download information from the Red Cross at www.redcross.org, FEMA at www.fema.org, and the State Office of Emergency Services at www.oes.ca.gov

How you and your family cope after a disaster depends on how well you prepare before the disaster strikes.

Emergency Alerts

The Sonoma County Emergency Management Division has a free emergency alert service: SoCoAlert. The service will send out an alert to your cell phone, home phone, email, or all three in the event of an emergency situation in your area. And, your alert area can be customized. For example you can ask for alerts in the vicinity of your home, workplace, school, or other locations. The alert messaging only occurs in the event of emergency situations.



To sign up, or to get more information about SoCoAlert, see the County web page at: <http://sonomacounty.ca.gov/FES/Emergency-Management/SoCoAlert/>

THE NEXT STEP

Toward a Healthier Future

A BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SEBASTOPOL TOXICS EDUCATION PROGRAM



Easy Answers

■ You can get answers to some of your survey questions about toxics and alternatives via **The STEP Online Index** at www.healthyworld.org/STEPIndex.html. 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.

- Healthier **housecleaning** and **gardening**
- Less-toxic approaches to **ants, snails, mosquitoes, fleas, weeds, poison oak, blackberries, rodents, and mold**
- Methodologies that avoid toxics, like **permaculture** and **IPM**
- Evaluations of specific toxics, including **Roundup** and **2,4-D**
- Evidence of human and pet **health problems related to toxics, including pesticides**

■ **The next Sebastopol Toxics Collection Day is on Tuesday August 15**, from 4 to 8pm. To make an appointment, call 707/795-2025 or 877/747-1870 at least 24 hours before the event. 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.

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

■ **Please let us know if you have a toxics question, article idea, or success story!**

Thank You For Your Feedback!



Thank you to all the Sebastopol residents who took the time to send in your STEP Survey cards. We appreciate hearing your thoughts about the newsletter, including how you use it and what articles you'd like to see in the future.

So, what were your responses?

■ **90% said that you find *The Next STEP (TNS)* newsletter helpful and interesting.** Reader comments included: "Very," "You are doing a great job!!" and "Keep on keeping on."

■ Of those responding about pesticide use, **23% said that you use pesticides at home or work, a big drop from last year's 39%. Of those using pesticides, 50% use just natural/nontoxic pesticides, 8% use synthetic/toxic products, and 42% use both.**

■ We're delighted that **75% of you said that this newsletter has helped you reduce or avoid the use of toxics**, an increase from last year. That really makes our work feel worthwhile!

For instance, readers reported that our information has helped you properly dispose of "old medicines and toxics like paint," skip using Roundup, and apply vinegar instead of toxic herbicides. It's also helped you avoid toxics in sunblocks, dryer sheets, Christmas trees, and managing "ants and garden pests."

One reader said, "I learned how to control weeds naturally." (Yay!) Another said, "I use vinegar for just about everything" (and it is indeed

a handy material for many household uses).

Others said, "This information helps deter my mom from using pesticides," and "Excellent replacements, great reminders." Another expressed appreciation for the "moral support." How wonderful!

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 excellent questions and ideas for future articles; you'll find answers already appearing in this issue, and in upcoming editions.

Additionally, 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 really appreciate getting *The Next STEP* Newsletter with all the good information. And I appreciate that you are spreading the word about healthier choices for families and homes!"

~ A STEP Reader

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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. It costs about \$165 a year plus in-house copying, which is a drop in the bucket of Sebastopol's \$11 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.

Choosing Safer Bouquets

Are you buying flowers for Mother's Day, graduation, or home décor? Reduce the toxic exposure for yourself and others by seeking organic and "no pesticide" options. Unfortunately, mainstream flowers can be doused with toxic pesticides during growing and shipping, and regulations are less-protective than for food. Read our story, with more information and healthier local sources, by going to **Flowers** in the STEP Index.

You can also learn more about the reality of the global flower business in the book *Flower Confidential* by Amy Stewart, www.amystewart.com/books/flower-confidential.

Another local eco-option is First Light Farm in Petaluma, which offers a certified organic casual You-Pick flower patch, June-Oct. Bring cash. www.facebook.com/firstlightcsa.

Evaluating Your Home & Garden Products

As you enjoy your spring gardening, DIY projects, and preparation for summer fun, be sure to read product labels carefully before purchase and use. Seek to avoid those with the legal keywords Danger and Warning. Consider and take seriously the other warnings on the label; they indicate risks of harm. Also, look beyond the labels to understand the chronic risks. And follow all safety directions.

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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www.healthyworld.org/STEPIndex.html

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Additionally, ask your lawn service or landscaper to get your permission before using any product, so you can evaluate whether you want it on your land. For more on this, look in our Index under **Pesticides & Toxics: Assessing toxicity**.

Detoxing Your Weeding

Too often in our wars with weeds we unnecessarily expose ourselves, our families, our pets, and our land to toxic materials. Here are a few ways you can play it safer this year.

Keeping toxics off your lawn

■ **Skip the "weed and feed" lawn products. Do you know that they likely include toxic herbicides** that can harm you, anyone at your house, your pets, and your ecosystem? They're not just fertilizers!

These combo products aren't even a smart approach for your lawn, because each material should have its own timing and application protocol. That was the reason Canada gave for banning them in 2010. (www.thespruce.com/canada-bans-weed-n-feed-products-3969993.)

These weedkillers can also kill beneficial organisms. Plus, says turf-care expert Kelly Burke, most popular brands use a high nitrogen fertilizer that encourages top growth but doesn't nurture the plant's health and vigor. (www.thespruce.com/controversial-weed-n-feed-2152853)

Read more at www.healthyworld.org/GRAPHICS/STEP/stepvol15no3.pdf.

■ **If you still want a "weed and feed," find one with non-toxic ingredients.** Avoid those with toxic herbicides such as 2,4-D, dicamba, and mecoprop/MCPP.

■ **Prevent weeds from the start by nurturing a healthy lawn.** Burke notes that weeds often reveal underlying problems. For more about creating a healthy lawn, see the STEP Index under **Lawn Care**, and www.thespruce.com/organic-weed-control-2153150.

Learning about herbicides and alternatives

■ **For more on 2-4,D, glyphosate (Roundup), and other common**

pesticides, see NCAP's scientific and readable fact sheets at www.pesticide.org/pesticide_factsheets.

■ **Also see "12 Ways to Get Rid of Weeds Without Using Roundup"** at www.ecowatch.com/12-ways-to-get-rid-of-weeds-without-using-roundup-1891166153.html. They suggest that you can instead: Mulch, hand-dig weeds, plant stronger competitive plants, selectively water and fertilize your land, solarize (cover an area with plastic), and minimize tilling. They also advise considering vinegar, soap, boiling water, corn gluten meal, and a flame weeder. I'd add sheet mulch to that list; look for that in the STEP Index.

■ **For more weed management info**, see **Weeds** in our Index.

Eating Your Weeds, Redux

In our prior issue, we described common "weeds" that have traditionally been eaten and used for healing. Sebastopol plant lover, seed saver, and Master Gardener Marilyn Madrone responded by sharing some of her current favorite wild salads with me. I was inspired just reading about her healthy treats!

She said, "At this writing, my salad is dandelion, chickweed, quinoa, and a European import called mâche — with shredded carrots and onion greens. Yesterday's salad was a huge amount of tender dandelion greens with goat chevre, quinoa, dried cranberries, sunflower seeds, carrots and onion greens." She added, "Dandelion is a best friend. One leaf of it and any of last evening's foolish eating is forgotten." Good to know!

She suggested that we explore these summer "weed" herbs, when their leaves are young: **purslane** (full of essential fatty acid omega-3s), **lamb's quarters** (a quinoa), and **pigweed** (an amaranth).

To learn more about identifying and eating these plants, see www.livescience.com/15322-healthiest-backyard-weeds.html and www.ediblewildfood.com/pigweed.aspx. **Before eating any wild plant**, always be sure that you've identified it right and understand any risks!