

Is Something Bugging You? Don't Spray 'em! Outsmart 'em

On May 13, GreenCAP's Alternatives to Pesticides - program featured Don Rivard, the executive director of the New England Pest Control Association and an expert consultant to professionals and consumers on Integrated Pest Management. ~ -

"IPM is more than just not using pesticides," he told a audience of more than fifty people at the Parish of St. Paul in Newton Highlands. "IPM means building and maintaining the environment to prevent pests."

Rivard defined a pest as something that causes health or economic harm—an insect or a plant is a pest only when it is in the wrong place. For example, termites are beneficial insects when they are eating dead wood to break up debris outside but they are considered pests when they are eating your house.

Modern pest control is based on the principles of ecology. Rivard emphasized the basics of prevention and control; regular and thorough cleaning and structural repair to ensure that conditions do not attract pests or provide easy access, food, water and shelter. The home owner or property manager should keep up with simple repairs such as sealing cracks and crevices or improving ventilation and controlling humidity.

Rivard also suggested regular inspections to identify any pest problem as early as possible. Then, if you find a pest, the first step is accurate identification. Information about the pest's biology and behavior can help you separate the "good" bugs from the ones likely to cause damage. Then you choose the proper pest control tools. In the old days, the approach was - to broadcast spray. Today, we know that approach often doesn't work.

Treatment with pesticides doesn't solve the problem because it doesn't change the underlying conditions that created the pest problem. Rivard cited the example of an office that had a gnat problem coming from over watered potted plants. The solution was to remove the infested plants and to bring in healthy plants.

Rivard held up a variety of other pest control tools including simple baits and mechanical traps. If, after all other methods have been used and the pest problem still poses a problem, a pesticide may be tried. The IPM approach includes trying the least toxic, least amount of chemical pesticide using the most stringent safety conditions to protect people, animals and the environment. Rivard explained the need to match the intervention to the environment as well as to the pest, citing a child care area where poison pellets had been placed out of sight of adults but within easy reach of crawling children.

After his presentation, Rivard answered questions from the audience. The May 13 program was funded by a Toxics Use Reduction Network Grant from the Toxics Use Reduction Institute, University of Mass/Lowell. The grant funds education about toxics use reduction and the impact of pesticides on our health and the

environment. GreenCAP's "Alternatives to Pesticides" education campaign is expected to become a model for other communities.

by L. Maeve Wards Ellie Goldberg

Is Something Bugging You? **QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

by Don Rivard, IPM Resources & Ellie Goldberg, GreenCAP

Q: Does moisture inside walls from ice dams encourage nests of bees or other pests inside house walls?

A: Yes.

Q: What can one do (short of ripping out walls) to correct both the moisture and the nests? We have bees (yellow jackets?) in our walls that came in the house very often last fall. I have located two places outside the house where they fly in and out. Once inside the walls, they enter our rooms through sash cord holes. I've tried sealing these temporarily, but to no avail. What can we do about wasp nests in windows between storm windows and inside windows?

A: *It is important to first accurately identify the type of insect because each type lives in its own place and has its own behaviors. If it is a bee problem, consult a bee professional. Next identify and control the source of moisture. Repair leaks and replace water damaged wood. Seal cracks and holes. Depending on the location, add ventilation with ridge vents or air louvers. Use fans to increase airflow. Use silica gel or diatomaceous earth to absorb moisture. Use dehumidifiers. Most structural moisture and humidity problems could be prevented by building a structure with adequate ventilation in the first place.*

Q: What can I do about carpenter bees?

A: *Plug the holes. Paint or varnish the wood or if the damage is extensive, replace the damaged wood with painted or varnished wood.*

Q: How can you tell where carpenter ants come from?

A: *Watch them, especially between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Follow the trail. Look for moist wood, leaking roofs, or sweating pipes. Inspect for moisture underneath insulation and around built-in dishwashers where moisture is trapped. Fix the conditions that attract the ants. Outside, remove wood piles, dead and dying trees, and tree stumps.*

Q: How do I solve ants in a home without poisoning my kids and dog?

A: *Good sanitation and hygiene! Vacuum up both the crumbs and the ants. Use enclosed bait-- the dual action type offers sweet and protein bait to appeal to different ants' tastes.*

Q: How well has NEPCA done in teaching landlords about Integrated Pest Management (IPM)?

A: *Not very well. To educate your landlord about IPM share the new manual from the Massachusetts Pesticide Bureau, Integrated Pest Management Kit for Building Managers. Call 617/727-3000 for a free copy.*

Q: Help! Termites are entering through a porous cement block foundation. Is there a non-pesticide method of eliminating termites? How can I eliminate their food supply (my house!)?

A: *Remove wood piles and dead trees from your property. Move any vegetation away from your house. Consider using crushed rock or small stones or peat moss instead of bark mulch, which can attract carpenter ants and termites. GreenCAP recommends the articles "NonToxic Termite Treatments!" in Organic Gardening Magazine, December 1995; and "sealing with Carpenter Ants,"*

Q: *Are there members of New England Pest Control Association who are in the Green Decade Coalition?*

A: *Yes. Anyone can become a member of the Green Decade Coalition. Membership facilitates and fosters the sharing of environmental values and information. The yearly membership dues and donations makes it possible to print the Green News newsletter, conduct the Environmental Speaker Series, and undertake a number of important environmental projects that benefit the whole community. However, membership in the Green Decade Coalition does not mean that an individual or a business is endorsed by the Green Decade*

The National Parent Teachers Association Position Statement. *"Pesticides are, by nature, poisons, and exposure--even at low levels--may cause serious adverse health effects. Our nation's children, because of a variety of age-related factors, are at increased risk of cancer, neurobehavioral impairment and other health problems as a result of their exposure to pesticides."*

Q: Head Lice is a big problem at my child's school. What can parents do?

Teach children not to share hats or combs. Inspect your child's hair and scalp regularly. Encourage short hair. Encourage your school to get rid of carpeting and upholstered furnishings. According to the Healthy Schools Network of the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety (617/524-6686 x19) carpets in schools are a haven for mold, mildew, dust mites and lice.

*Compare your school's exports with those described in the following elementary school newsletter from McLean, Va. "...Once lice have established themselves within a class, it takes a great deal of parent cooperation to get rid of them. The lice can live only 24 hours away from the host. However, one louse can lay up to 90 eggs, which hatch from 7-14 days later. Thus, nit removal is very important in controlling lice outbreaks. The school vacuums the affected classrooms, bags up pillows and studied animals for two weeks, and hangs up coats from the backs of chairs or places them in marked plastic bags. **We cannot spray with pesticides because they pose a risk to all children, especially those with asthma and allergies.** We do inform parents that lice are in the classroom and encourage them to check heads for several days. Our "no nit" policy for children returning after treatment upsets some parents, but it is the recommendation of the National Pediculosis Association (NPA) and the Public Health Department. If you want more information on this subject, the phone number for NPA is 617/449-6487. "*

The Greening of Newton

Our Toxic Times, a monthly publication of the Chemical Injury Information Network, recently published information about Newton's proclamation naming March "Alternatives to Pesticides Month" and described GreenCAP's pledge campaign to promote learning about alternatives to pesticides. The article called the project a "remarkable community achievement" and brought requests for information from Sarasota and Boca Raton, Florida, Norfolk, Nebraska, towns near and far throughout Massachusetts, and Australia. For more information on GreenCAP's pledge campaign or to schedule a presentation for your group, call Ellie Goldberg, 956-9637

NOTICE OF PESTICIDE APPLICATIONS ON RIGHTS-OF-WAY IN NEWTON

Conrail, the commuter rail line, will be applying the herbicides RoundUp-Pro or Oust along its right-of-way in the city of Newton between June 9 and June 20, 1997. The Massachusetts Turnpike Authority has announced its plan to spray along its right-of-way between July 9 and August 22. According to David Naparstek, Newton Health Commissioner, the MBTA has not filed a plan regarding spraying the Green Line this year. For more information, contact GreenCAP, 617/965-1995.

The IPM Way: Focus on POISON IVY

Source: Massachusetts Audubon Society, *Sensible Pest Control: A Handbook of Integrated Pest Management* For additional information call the Massachusetts Audubon Society Environmental Help Line: 617/259-9500 x. 7415.

Poison ivy is most often found at woodland edges, Along roadsides, fence posts and waterways. Because poison ivy fruits are eaten by a wide variety of birds, the plant is common around trees, telephone wires, and wherever birds are likely to perch. It is also common where soils have been disturbed by construction. It does not grow where repeated cultivation occurs.

Limit attempts to control poison ivy to areas where there is unavoidable human activity. The most effective means of control is by removing the poison ivy plants by digging. The best time to remove the plants is in early spring after leaves have unfurled but while the soil is still wet. *Always wear gloves and protective clothing.* To keep poison ivy from returning, replace it with fast growing plants such as native grasses or ground covers which can compete successfully with the poison ivy for soil space and nutrients.

Poison ivy should never be burned; inhaling the oils from the plant can cause swelling of the respiratory tract. Don't spray. It kills desirable plants that protect from future poison ivy growth. You can cut off the tip of a plant and paint an herbicide directly onto the cut plant tip so the poison will then spread through the plant's vascular systems, but since even the dead plants are poisonous to humans, they still have to be dug out and removed. *So why bother using pesticides at all?*

Do you use Alternatives to Pesticides? Don't you wish everybody did?

GreenCAP promotes Integrated Pest Management (IPM) for all Newton's buildings and grounds. IPM is a proactive problem-solving approach to Weed, insect and rodent control that reduces or eliminates the need for pesticides. Instead of automatically using pesticides, IPM experts ask: What is the pest? Where are the pests getting in? What changes will eliminate the pests' access, food, water and hiding places? What structural

