

## Community Strategies for Pesticide Reduction, Pittsfield, MA

### Goals:

- Reduce the amount of toxic chemicals applied to lawns, gardens, public lands and institutional properties.
- Protect the health and welfare of children and seniors by encouraging the use of less or non-toxic products or practices.
- Build an educated citizenry who care about the adverse impacts of pesticides on public health and the environment.
- Increase commitment to Toxics Use Reduction among municipal officials.

### Problem:

**Pesticides can harm wildlife.** Pesticides can harm birds, bees, butterflies, and many beneficial insects.

**Pesticides travel.** Pesticides migrate into streams, ponds and lakes, and may end up in drinking water sources.

**Pesticides may be carcinogens.** Studies link exposure to increased childhood brain cancer, leukemia, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, and prostate, ovarian and pancreatic cancers.

**Children are especially vulnerable.** Pesticides can disrupt the development of children's organs and physiological processes, causing irreversible damage. Exposure early in life can damage children's coordination, memory and stamina, including their ability to learn or play.

### Solution:

1. **Choose Plants Wisely.** Select plants suited to the conditions in your landscape, and that are pest and disease resistant.
2. **Install Plants Correctly.** Stressed plants are more vulnerable to insects and disease.
3. **Promote Plant Health.** Test the pH and nutrient level of soil before planting or fertilizing; water, prune and mulch properly.
4. **Keep Plants Well-Groomed.** Debris build up may harbor plant diseases and pests.
5. **An Ounce of Prevention....** Inspect plants regularly for insects, diseases or signs of ill health. Remember - some insects are beneficial!

### Audience:

- **General Public.** With the Western Massachusetts Master Gardener's Association, CET developed and presented information to the general public on Integrated Pest Management and the problems with pesticide use. We talked to 100s of people at community events and distributed "Earth Friendly Yard" flags. Extensive local press coverage spread the word to thousands.
- **Municipalities and Facility Managers.** Due to their size and authority, towns and large facilities can act as community leaders in pesticide reduction. With help from the DPW and Health Department, CET inserted information about pesticides in city water bills. CET presented Integrated Pest Management basics to Pittsfield department heads and discussed how to begin IPM at a monthly meeting of Berkshire County Facility Engineers.
- **Landscapers.** IPM training had never been offered to Berkshire County landscapers. CET offered an in-depth, local IPM workshop for landscapers, where they learned how to establish an IPM program and how to market this program to clients.
- **Retail Staff.** Retail staff at hardware stores and garden centers are seen as authorities for landscape questions. CET educated retail staff about their opportunity to encourage customers to choose the least toxic product and dispose of it properly.

### Results:

25 new parents and single mothers learned about IPM and less toxic products.

7 hardware store retail staff learned about pesticides and safer alternatives and promoted HHW collections.

53 landscapers, facility managers, school groundskeepers received a 3 hour introduction to IPM.

12 City of Pittsfield employees were trained in IPM and had specific landscaping questions addressed.

40 Members of Boards of Health (representing 20 Berkshire communities) learned about the health and environmental issues associated with pesticides.

15 Facility Engineers learned about health and environmental impacts as well as basics of IPM.

5 Master Gardeners developed a training program on IPM, which can now be used as one of their organization's presentations.

6 presentations introduced 210 people to IPM and healthier lawns and gardens. These presentations were given at the senior center, garden club, community garden, arboretum and the community college.

16,000 Pittsfield residents received basic information about pesticides and alternatives in their utility bill.

Over 250 people received information about pesticides from CET information tables at various community events.

For more information, visit [http://www.cetonline.org/Home/pesticide\\_reduction.htm](http://www.cetonline.org/Home/pesticide_reduction.htm)

Funding from the Toxics Use Reduction Institute of University of Massachusetts, Lowell.