

TOWN OF MARBLEHEAD
Board of Health

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ORGANIC

PEST MANAGEMENT POLICY

for

Turf and Landscape

May 3, 2001

Town of Marblehead
Board of Health
Organic Pest Management Policy
Phase 1 – Turf & Landscape

Prepared in accordance with the
Town of Marblehead, Board of Health
“Statement on Pesticides” of June 1998

SECTION 1: STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Town of Marblehead agrees with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that “all pesticides are toxic to some degree..., and the commonplace, widespread use of pesticides is both a major environmental problem and a public health issue.”¹

The Town of Marblehead Board of Health recognizes that all citizens, (particularly children), as well as other inhabitants of our natural environment, have a right to protection from exposure to hazardous chemicals and pesticides in particular.

The Town of Marblehead Board of Health recognizes that a balanced and healthy ecosystem is vital to the health of the town and its citizens; and as such is also in need of protection from exposure to hazardous chemicals and pesticides, in particular.

Furthermore, the Town of Marblehead Board of Health recognizes that it is in the best interest of public health to eliminate the use of toxic pesticides on Town-owned land; to encourage the reduction and elimination of the use of toxic pesticides on private property; and to introduce and promote natural, organic cultural and management practices to prevent and, when necessary, control pest problems on Town-owned land.

SECTION 2: PHILOSOPHY/PRINCIPLES

The Town of Marblehead Board of Health hereby adopts the *Precautionary Principle* (as defined by the *Wingspread Statement*) as the basis for its Organic Pest Management Policy. The Precautionary Principle states “*When an activity raises threats of harm to the environment or human health, precautionary measures should be taken, even if some cause and effect relationships are not yet fully established.*”²

SECTION 3: STATEMENT OF ACTION

Be it known that the Town of Marblehead Board of Health hereby adopts an Organic Pest Management (OPM) Policy which mandates the following:

- That the use and application of toxic chemical pesticides, either by Town of Marblehead employees or by private contractors, is prohibited on all Town-owned lands;
- That natural, organic turf and landscape cultural practices and maintenance shall be the method of choice to understand, prevent, and control potential pest problems;
- That all control products used under the terms of this policy shall be in keeping with, but not limited to, those products on the approved list of NOFA/Mass. (Northeast Organic Farmers' Association/Mass.) and/or the Organic Materials Review Institute of Eugene, OR;
- That an OPM Advisory Committee shall be formed;
- That Town of Marblehead employees who work with turf grass and the landscape receive education and training in natural, organic turf and landscape management;
- That a listing of all Town-owned lands affected by this policy be made available to the public;
- That a registry of all pesticides currently stored on Town-owned premises be compiled, with a goal of proper disposal through a Hazardous Wastes Collection program.
- That Town compost shall be tested on a yearly basis for contaminants, including, but not limited to, heavy metals and pesticides, as decided by the Public Health Director.

SECTION 4: PESTS AND PESTICIDES DEFINED

For the purpose of this policy, pests and pesticides are defined as follows. Pests are and may be known as *undesirable* plants, insects, fungi, bacteria, and rodents, birds and other animals. Common examples in turf grass and the landscape can be, but are not limited to, crabgrass, knotweed, poison ivy, chinch bugs, grubs, and a variety of plant pathogens.

Pesticides are defined by the Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture Pesticide Bureau as “substances or mixtures of substances that prevent, destroy, repel, or mitigate pests, or defoliate, desiccate, or regulate plants.³ Pesticides are poisonous substances that can have an adverse effect on the environment or impair human health...”⁴ Herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, miticides, avicides and rodenticides are all considered pesticides.

Under this policy, pesticides classified as known, likely, or probable human carcinogens or probable endocrine disruptors, or those pesticides that meet the criteria for Toxicity Category I or Toxicity Category II, as defined by the United States Environmental Protection Act (EPA) in section 156.10 of Part 156 of Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations can no longer be applied to any Town of Marblehead-owned lands. A list of the pesticides in the EPA’s Toxicity Categories I and II will be periodically updated and maintained at the offices of the Town of Marblehead Board of Health.

SECTION 5: ORGANIC PEST MANAGEMENT (OPM) DEFINED

Organic Pest Management is a problem-solving strategy that prioritizes a natural, organic approach to turf grass and landscape management without the use of toxic pesticides. It mandates the use of natural, organic cultural practices that promote healthy soil and plant life as a preventative measure against the onset of turf and landscape pest problems.

Essential OPM practices include, but are not limited to:

- regular soil testing;
- addition of approved soil amendments as necessitated by soil test results, following, but not limited to, the recommendations of NOFA/Mass (Northeast Organic Farmers’ Association/Mass) and/or the Organic Material Review Institute of Eugene, OR;
- selection of plantings using criteria of hardiness; suitability to native conditions; drought, disease and pest-resistance; and ease of maintenance;
- modification of outdoor management practices to comply with organic horticultural science, including scouting, monitoring, watering, mowing, pruning, proper spacing, and mulching;
- the use of physical controls, including hand-weeding and over-seeding;
- the use of biological controls, including the introduction of natural predators, and enhancement of the environment of a pest’s natural enemies;

- through observation, determining the most effective treatment time, based on pest biology and other variables, such as weather and local conditions; and
- eliminating pest habitats and conditions supportive of pest population increases.

OPM dictates the use of chemical controls, in consult with the OPM Advisory Board (See Section 9), only in the event of a public emergency as determined by the Board of Health.

SECTION 6: EXEMPTIONS

All outdoor pest management activities taking place on Town of Marblehead-owned land shall be subject to this OPM policy, except as follows:

1. Pesticides otherwise lawfully used for the purpose of maintaining a safe drinking water supply at drinking water treatment plants and at wastewater treatment plants and related collection, distribution, and treatment facilities.
2. Pesticides in contained baits or traps for the purpose of rodent control.
3. Pesticides classified by the United States Environmental Protection Agency as exempt materials under 40CRF 152.25, or those pesticides of a character not requiring FIFRA regulation.

SECTION 7: OPM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

In accordance with Section 4 of this policy, an OPM Advisory Committee shall act as a “Pest Management Board” to oversee and assist in the implementation of the OPM policy, to develop an OPM program consistent with Section 5 of this policy, and to advise the Town of Marblehead Board of Health of any problems encountered or amendments required to achieve the full and successful implementation of this policy. The Advisory Committee shall meet four times per year, unless otherwise called to meeting by the Board of Health.

The Advisory Committee will seek the participation, advice, and counsel of experts in the fields of organic turf and landscape management and IPM protocol. Broad community participation, including parents, schools, advocates, and local landscaping businesses will be encouraged on a non-voting basis. Voting membership on the OPM Advisory Committee shall be comprised of:

- Town of Marblehead, Board of Health (1 Representative)
- Recreation Parks and Forestry Department Board (1 Representative)
- Town of Marblehead, Cemetery Commission (1 Representative)

- Town of Marblehead, School Committee (1 Representative)
- Town of Marblehead Conservation Commission (1 Representative)
- 3 Citizen Representatives, knowledgeable about organic approaches to pest problems and organic horticulture, as appointed by the Board of Health.

SECTION 8: TRAINING AND EDUCATION

All Town of Marblehead personnel involved in the evaluation, approval, or implementation of organic turf and landscape maintenance and/or outdoor pest control, should receive hands-on training and education in natural, organic cultural and technical methods.

SECTION 9: EMERGENCY WAIVERS

If an emergency situation warrants the use of pesticides which would otherwise not be permitted under this policy, the Town of Marblehead Director of Public Health and/or the Board of Health shall have the authority to grant a temporary waiver for a period of thirty days. Notice of the waiver request shall be given to the OPM Advisory Committee for advice on resolving the problem without the use of pesticides. The waiver may be extended for an additional period not to exceed six months. Nothing in this waiver provision prohibits the Town of Marblehead from adopting additional waiver resolutions for as long as the condition exists, again not to exceed six months for any individual resolution.

Any waiver granting the use of pesticides on Town land shall require the use of Integrated Pest Management protocol as it pertains to the least toxic material chosen for any given application (see Addendum 1 for IPM definition).

The Board of Health shall determine if such a waiver is warranted based on the following criteria:

1. the pest situation poses a threat to human health and/or environmental quality;
2. viable alternatives consistent with this OPM policy do not exist.

Any Town department using a pesticide under such a waiver must comply with the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts regarding notification to site users and abutters.

¹ U. S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances, "Healthy Lawn, Healthy Environment, June 1992.

² Wingspread Conference, S. Johnson Foundation, Racine, WI, February 1998

³ Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture, Pesticide Bureau Regulations, 333CMR:203, Sec. 4, 1996

⁴ Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture, Pesticide Bureau, Regulation Home Page, www.massdfa.org/pestreg.htm, March 2000

ADDENDUM 1:

INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT (DEFINED)

Organic Pest Management strives first and foremost to prevent pest problems through the application of natural, organic horticultural and maintenance practices. OPM can incorporate some of the principles of **Integrated Pest Management (IPM)** in its program as is deemed suitable and necessary by the OPM Advisory Committee.

IPM is an ecologically-sound approach to suppressing and eliminating pest populations to keep them from causing health, economic, or aesthetic injury. IPM utilizes site-specific information about pest biology and behavior, environmental conditions, and the dynamics of human characteristics and activities in dealing with the prevention and control of pests that interfere with the purpose and use of a particular site.

The following steps outline the basic approach used in an IPM program.

- Monitoring and scouting the turf or landscape in question;
- Accurate record-keeping documenting any potential pest problems;
- Evaluation of the site with regard to any injury caused by a pest in question and a determination made on which course of treatment to follow;
- Chosen treatment to be the least damaging to the general environment and one that best preserves the natural ecosystem;
- Chosen treatment to be the most likely to produce long-term reductions in pest control requirements. The effective implementation must be operationally feasible, and must be cost effective in the short and long term.
- Chosen treatment must minimize negative impact to non-target organisms;
- Chosen treatment must be the least disruptive of natural controls available.
- Chosen treatment must be the least hazardous to human health.