

Patricia D. Hastings

From: "Patricia D. Hastings" <hastings@aesop.rutgers.edu>
To: "NJinPAS Advisory Committee" <NJinPASadvisory@aesop.rutgers.edu>; "NJinPAS Turf, Ornamental, & Greenhouse" <NJinPASsturfornamental@aesop.rutgers.edu>; "NJinPASSchoolIPM" <njinpasschoolipm@aesop.rutgers.edu>
Sent: Monday, July 22, 2002 10:52 AM
Subject: Request for School IPM Success Stories

NJinPAS has received the following request from Jane Nogaki for School IPM success stories in New Jersey. Jane is the Pesticide Program Coordinator for the New Jersey Environmental Federation and a member of the Advisory Committee to NJinPAS.

Thank you.

Beyond PESTicides is collecting success stories of IPM in schools for a document and press release timed for early September, when school is starting. Bob Maclay who has been actively working with the Montclair, NJ school district shares his story below. Beyond Pesticides is hoping to get two or more stories from each state. Does anyone have a story to share to add to NJ's "chapter" in the report? If so, please send it to Kowens@beyondpesticides.org. Even if the story is in progress, please consider writing something, and of course share it with us here in NJ too.

Jane Nogaki

----- Forwarded Message: -----

From: maclundry@att.net
To: Kowens@beyondpesticides.org
Subject: Local Success Story
Date: Tue, 02 Jul 2002 23:37:48 +0000

From: Bob Maclay
16 Windermere Road
Montclair, New Jersey 07043
(973) 655-0987
maclundry@att.net

July 2, 2002

To: Kagan Owens
Beyond Pesticides
Kowens@beyondpesticides.org

Dear Kagan:

I am a parent in Montclair, New Jersey. Our two daughters, Valerie and Lisa, will be in the 6th grade and 8th grade next year. I am a PTA representative to the Board of Education. I have a pesticide story which Jane Nogaki of the New Jersey Environmental Federation suggested I share with you.

7/22/2002

When we moved to this suburban community from New York City six years ago, neighbors began educating me in the necessity of pesticide use. One neighbor informed me that if I didn't use an insecticide to kill grubs, the grubs would eat the roots of the grass and destroy the lawn. I had a preconceived fear of pesticides, but I wasn't yet a self-identified environmental activist. I was speechless in the face of my neighbor's recommendation.

I did not apply any grub killer. Last summer, I had to excavate the yard to fix a pipe. I found grubs in the soil, and, frankly, I was ecstatic. Here was the ecology taught in school, made real and visible! Here was evidence of insect life cycle!

I began to realize that, at least in our neighborhood, grubs are controlled by natural predators: birds and small mammals. More natural life cycle! When the crows peck to get the grubs, they aerate the soil, for free!

Last December, an article about Integrated Pest Management appeared in the Newark Star-Ledger. The piece mentioned a local activist who convinced her town's school system to adopt IPM ten years ago. The story then went on to mention an EPA grant funneled through the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, which is being used now to test IPM in six local urban schools. I began to wonder about pest management and pesticide use in the Montclair schools.

I mentioned my concern to our superintendent of schools and to the business manager for our school district. My perception was that because they were accustomed to seeing me sitting and listening to them at Board of Education meetings, they were willing to listen to me. The business manager referred me to our school district's director of buildings and grounds. The director of buildings and grounds gave me a hand-written list of pesticides used on our school athletic fields.

The Star-Ledger article named Jane Nogaki, identifying her as the pesticide expert with the New Jersey Environmental Federation. I called her and explained my mission. She gave me basic, preliminary information as to which pesticides on the hand-written list were the most toxic. At this point, the school superintendent called me and the business manager in for a meeting. I told them that there appeared to be cause for concern.

The business manager then scheduled a meeting with me,

the director of buildings and grounds and the licensed pesticide applicator for buildings and grounds. In that meeting, she asked the director and the applicator to prepare a formal list of all pesticides and chemical fertilizers used on fields, including the material safety data sheets, and to send the information to Jane at the environmental federation. They did so, very promptly.

In the meantime, the superintendent suggested that I look into pesticide use inside school buildings. I quickly learned that indoor pest control is contracted to a company that uses Integrated Pest Management methods and materials.

Jane prepared and mailed a formal response to our school district. We learned that Dylox was being used for spot treatment of 'grub problems.' Barricade was being used as an herbicide, in granular form distributed by a tractor-drawn spreader. Most alarmingly, Trimec Plus, which contains arsenic, was being used for spot treatments. The buildings and grounds department immediately agreed to withdraw Barricade, Dylox and Trimec Plus from use.

I then gave a speech at the public meeting of the Board of Education. I told the story of my neighbor's attempt to educate me in the use of insecticide for grub control, of my subsequent inaction, of my happy discovery of grubs in our soil, and of the role of natural predators. I challenged the board on the issue of curriculum. I said that if we teach ecology in the classroom, and then use toxic chemicals on school grounds to create an unnatural grassy monoculture purged of insect life cycles, we have effectively demonstrated to students that the content of our curriculum is irrelevant outside the classroom. We don't practice what we preach!

In my speech, I outlined the dangerous chemicals in use on school grounds, and the effect of chemicals on children's health. I singled out Dylox, mentioned that it has been identified as a probable mutagen, teratogen and carcinogen. I purposely did not mention Trimec Plus and arsenic, because I did not want to embarrass the buildings and grounds people. (I just read *Silent Spring* for the first time. Rachel Carson mentioned how marketing and incomplete disclosure often conspire to make applicators unwitting dispensers of dangerous chemicals.)

Finally, I asked for the formation of a pesticide committee. Our school district has recently launched a student health and wellness initiative which is being managed primarily by our town's PTA council. The Board of Education agreed to the formation of a committee, and the PTA council co-president received agreement from the superintendent that the pesticide committee would be a sub-committee of the health and wellness initiative.

At this point we faced a competing interest. There is a group of boosters for school athletics called 'True Blue.' The group consists of school athletes, parents of athletes, coaches, and other school officials. True Blue is very concerned about the turf on heavily-used athletic fields.

We had the first meeting of our pesticide committee. Seven people attended: an assistant principal from the high school, representing True Blue and athletic-field turf; the business manager; the chief of buildings and grounds; the environmental outreach coordinator for our town's department of public works (who works primarily on composting and recycling, but is knowledgeable about turf management); yours truly; a high school science teacher, representing the teachers' union; and a member of the PTA council. The meeting was at times heated and emotional. Buildings and grounds mentioned a number of non-toxic, alternative methods and materials being tried experimentally. Buildings and grounds and True Blue remained adamant on one issue: Tupersan is used as a chemical herbicide on playing fields. It has not yet been linked to health problems. There is fear that the football field, in particular, will deteriorate without the use of Tupersan. Jane and I have explained the use of corn gluten meal as an organic, non-toxic herbicide and fertilizer, but so far buildings and grounds and True Blue are afraid to experiment with it. It is my charge to gather more information about the successful use of corn gluten meal on heavily-used school athletic fields. I may experiment with it in my own yard, where I have allowed broad-leaf weeds to invade.