

The Village of New Paltz Board of Trustees



Healthy Turf and Landscape Policy

November 12, 2008

SECTION 1: STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Village of New Paltz 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 Village of New Paltz recognizes that all citizens (especially 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 Village of New Paltz recognizes that a balanced and healthy ecosystem is vital to the health of the Village and its citizens; and as such is also in need of protection from exposure to hazardous chemicals — and pesticides in particular.

Furthermore, the Village of New Paltz recognizes that it is in the best interest of public health to eliminate the aesthetic use of pesticides on all Village-owned land; and to introduce and promote healthy, natural, organic cultural and management practices to prevent and, when necessary, control pest problems on Village-owned land.

SECTION 2: PHILOSOPHY/PRINCIPLES

The Precautionary Principle

The Village of New Paltz Board of Trustees hereby adopts the Precautionary Principle (as defined by the Wingspread Statement) as a basis for its **Healthy Turf and Landscape 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

Health of People, Pets, Wildlife, and the Environment

- a) Turf and landscape pesticides — even at low levels of exposure — are associated with increased risks of birth defects, cancer, autism, neurotoxicity, respiratory and immune-system damage, liver and kidney damage, endocrine disruption, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease, asthma, and other health problems. Children are especially at risk since their systems are more vulnerable and they tend to spend more time on lawns. And many pesticides are teratogens — they can cross the placenta and adversely affect developing fetuses, even at extremely low doses that don't harm adults;
- b) Turf and landscape pesticides poison drinking water, groundwater, ponds, lakes, rivers, streams, the soil, and the air, among other environs;
- c) Turf and landscape pesticides harm pets and wildlife;
- d) Turf and landscape pesticides can be tracked into homes (by pets and people), where these toxins can persist for many years, often degrading into compounds far more dangerous than the original chemicals. ³

SECTION 3: STATEMENT OF ACTION

Be it known that The Village of New Paltz Board of Trustees hereby adopts a **Healthy Turf and Landscape Policy** which mandates the following:

That the use and application of toxic chemical pesticides by either Village of New Paltz employees or by private contractors, is prohibited on all Village-owned lands;

that healthy, natural, organic turf and landscape cultural practices and maintenance shall be the method of choice to control potential pest problems on Village-owned land;

that all control products used under the terms of this Policy shall be in keeping with organic products as well as other non-organic products that meet the criteria for Toxicity Category IV, 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; ⁴

that Village of New Paltz employees who work with turf grass and landscape shall receive education and training in natural, organic turf and landscape management.

SECTION 4: PESTS AND PESTICIDES DEFINED

For the purpose of this Policy, pests may be known as undesirable plants, insects, and fungi. 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 as "substances or mixtures of substances that prevent, destroy, repel, or mitigate pests, or defoliate, desiccate, or regulate plants. Pesticides are poisonous substances that can have an adverse effect on the environment or impair human health..." ⁵ Herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, and miticides 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, Category II, and category III, 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 Village-owned land in New Paltz for the aesthetic maintenance of turf and landscape.

A list of the pesticides in the EPA's Toxicity Categories I and II, and III will be periodically updated and maintained at Village Hall; Village of New Paltz, 25 Plattekill Avenue.

SECTION 5: HEALTHY TURF AND LANDSCAPE

The Healthy Turf and Landscape Policy is one that prioritizes and mandates a healthy, natural, organic approach to turf grass and landscape management without the use of toxic pesticides. It mandates the use of healthy, natural, organic cultural practices that promote healthy soil and plant life as a preventative measure against the onset of turf and landscape pest problems for all Village-owned land.

Essential Healthy Turf and Landscape practices include, but are not limited to:

- regular soil testing;
- 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.
- The use of chemical controls, in consult with the Village of New Paltz Environmental Conservation Commission, only in the event of a public emergency as determined by the Village of New Paltz Board of Trustees. (See Section 6.)

SECTION 6: EMERGENCY WAIVERS

If an emergency situation warrants the use of pesticides which would otherwise not be permitted under this Policy, the Village of New Paltz Board of Trustees 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 Village of New Paltz Environmental Conservation Commission 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 Village of New Paltz 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 Village land shall require the use of Integrated Pest Management protocol as it pertains to the least toxic material chosen for any given application.

The Village of New Paltz Board of Trustees 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 Policy do not exist.

Any Village department using a pesticide under such a waiver must comply with the law of the Commonwealth of New York regarding notification to site users and abutters.

SECTION 7: FUTURE AMENDMENTS TO THIS POLICY

This Policy can only be amended by a process that includes, but is not limited to, a formal public hearing.

Footnotes

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. <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/>
4. <http://www.epa.gov/oppfead1/labeling/lrm/chap-07.htm>
5. Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture, Pesticide Bureau, Regulation Home Page, <http://www.massdfa.org/pestreg.htm>, March 2000

