

# **Bernards Township Declares Playgrounds and Athletic Fields “Pesticide Free Zones”**

*First of Many Ladybug Logos placed at Pleasant Valley Park*



**Bernards Twp., NJ**—The environmentally friendly ladybug is alive and well at Pleasant Valley Park, thanks to a new Bernards Township policy that declares key recreational areas as “Pesticide Free Zones.”

According to a resolution adopted on December 23, 2008, the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) policy for the township identifies key sensitive areas to be managed without harmful chemical pesticides. Integrated pest management calls for the management of insects, undesired plants, and plant diseases with methods that are least likely to impact human health or the environment. All Township owned lawns and property will be managed under the new policy which will utilize no pesticides within the designated Pesticide Free Zones, and pesticides only as a last resort after other methods have been tried in other areas.

The Township Committee adopted the IPM policy on December 23, 2008, at the recommendation of the Bernards Twp. Environmental Commission. Township volunteer and now Environmental Commission member Joe Speeney presented information on the benefits of reducing lawn care pesticides at the August 2008 Township Committee

meeting. The Township Committee subsequently asked Pat Monaco, Director of the Department of Public Works, to develop a plan and in just four short month's Monaco's plan was approved.

Bernards Township joins 26 other NJ communities which have designated Pesticide Free Zones in parks including Chatham, Clifton, Irvington, Newark, East and West Windsor, Ocean City, Dennis Twp, Colts Neck, Hazlet, Neptune, Raritan, Red Bank, Pine Beach and Wall Townships. It is the first township in Somerset County to do so.

“We need residents to do their part in reducing pesticides in our environment and keeping our air, water and land safe from toxic chemicals,” said Mayor Carolyn Kelly “We wanted to lead by example. Residents can participate by making their own lawn a Pesticide Free Zone.” Committeeperson Mary Pavilini added that the policy also “protects ground water and the aquatic life in streams that run through our town”.

According to **Jane Nogaki, Program Coordinator for the NJ Environmental Federation**, New Jersey uses about 4 million pounds of pesticides annually for lawn care, mosquito control, agricultural production and golf course maintenance.

“We especially want to protect children because they are closer to pesticide applications on the ground, and they are still developing and absorb more pesticides than adults,” Nogaki said.

Pesticides used to kill weeds and insects threaten the health of our children by increasing the risk of cancer, learning disabilities, asthma, birth defects, kidney disease and other ailments. These chemicals can also poison animals, pollute local streams and rivers and seep through the ground into our underground aquifers.

Fortunately, alternative processes exist that are cost effective and friendly to the environment: simple things like mulching areas properly to prevent weeds, planting native plants which are not subject to insect problems, and reducing or eliminating lawns to cut down on the need for watering, fertilizing and mowing. Lawn areas can be managed with an organic lawn care process which focuses on the soil to mitigate weeds by building a strong, healthy, lawn without pesticide and synthetic fertilizer dependency. According to township resident Speeney, “Organic lawn care methods save money in the long run while protecting children and the environment. I’m delighted the Township Committee has taken this step to “green Bernards Township” and protect public health and our waterways at the same time. We are very fortunate to have their outstanding stewardship.”

Township Public Works Director Pat Monaco designed the plan for Bernards Township’s public grounds using organic lawn care methods as a key element of the Integrated Pest Management approach. That policy/plan is available on the town’s website at

<http://www.bernards.org/Township%20Committee/Document/IntegratedPestManagementSystem08-12-31.pdf>

Under a NJ law passed in 2002, all schools public and private from K-12th grade are mandated to have an IPM plan and use low impact methods of pest control as the first option.

NJ Environmental Federation canvassers will be in Bernards Township this week signing up members and handing out literature that tells of the new “Pesticide Free Zone” policy the town has adopted.

Organic lawn care guidance and a list of NJ organic lawn care professional landscapers can be found on the Bernards Township Environmental Commission website at [www.bernards.org/boards\\_commissions/environmental/ec\\_organic\\_lawn\\_care.aspx](http://www.bernards.org/boards_commissions/environmental/ec_organic_lawn_care.aspx)

“Pesticide Free Zone” ladybug logo yard signs are available from [www.cleanwateraction.org/NJEF](http://www.cleanwateraction.org/NJEF) or contact Jane Nogaki, 856-767-1110; email [Janogaki@cleanwater.org](mailto:Janogaki@cleanwater.org). Natural methods of pest control are also available from Master Gardeners of Somerset County at 908-526-6293.