

Sample Resolution: Organic Land Care

WHEREAS: The City of _____ is committed to eliminating the exposure of our citizens, both children and adults, to chemicals that are known, or suspected to be, toxins or carcinogens, while striving to lead our community by example and by promotion of policies, regulations and practices that eliminate exposure to toxic compounds; and

WHEREAS: Organic land care practices using only non-toxic methods is a proven practice that establishes an approach to managing with a focus on soil health, cultural practices and mechanical and/or physical controls to eliminate the need for using toxic pesticides; and

WHEREAS: Organic land care requires accurate pest identification, frequent monitoring for pest presence, determining appropriate action levels, and properly combining biological, cultural, physical, and, only when deemed necessary, use of least toxic pesticides in a way that minimizes health, environmental, and economic risks; and

WHEREAS: Organic land care will reduce both the presence of toxins from synthetic pesticides in the environment of our City, but will also reduce the introduction of unnecessary nutrients from synthetic fertilizer into the watershed of _____.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

It shall be the policy of the City of _____ to commit to utilize organic land care practices, and the use of least toxic compounds only when necessary, in the maintenance and protection of City property, as such taking a precautionary approach and thereby minimizing, if not eliminating, exposure to toxic pesticides on the part of our citizens and the environment;

AND, FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED;

The City _____ shall seek help from organic land care expert(s) to develop and execute a multi-year plan to eliminate the use of synthetic fertilizers and toxic pesticides on City property and ensure that municipal workers receive appropriate training in organic land care practices.

Background Information

This resolution requires that organic land management practices, according to organic land care Standards as designated by the Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) involving only least toxic pesticides be utilized in maintaining City owned property and that these practices be shared and promoted for use by the public in maintaining private property throughout the community.

There are numerous resources that tabulate lists of least toxic products, (e.g., the United States Environmental Protection Agency's minimum risk products list or materials listed as organic by non-profit organizations such as the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) and NOFA Standards) to facilitate the choice of materials that are preferred, allowed and prohibited.

Organic land care is an effective and environmentally sensitive approach to pest and turf management that relies on a combination of common-sense best management practices without the use of toxic pesticides.

Toxic pesticides are harmful to human health, pets and the environment. Organic land care protects public health and our watershed from degradation and contamination. For purposes of example, the commonly used neonicotinoid class of systemic insecticides (neonics) are persistent in the environment, harm pollinator health, move into surface waters and up the food chain affecting songbirds and mammals. Emerging evidence shows harm to the developing brain and hormone disrupting activity by some neonics.

Organic land care uses current, comprehensive information on the life cycles of pests and their interaction with the environment. This information, in combination with a variety of pest control methods, is used to manage pest damage by economical means, and with minimal hazard to people, property, and the environment.

Synthetic fertilizers harm soil biology, and contribute to greenhouse gas emissions as well as inhibiting the carbon storing ability of the soil. In light of climate change, organic land care is a necessary step forward in addressing this crisis. Organic land care plays a key role in municipalities climate change action plan in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

More careful application of organic fertilizers as part of an organic land care program by the City will decrease our contribution of excess nutrients to the watershed that contribute to the proliferation of toxic algae blooms to adjacent bodies of water. In addition, organic land care also helps mitigate stormwater runoff.

Organic land care standards emphasize the use of native plants, thereby helping to mitigate risk of wildfire, store more carbon, support biodiversity, and conserve water for irrigation.

Promotion of this policy of organic land management protects the safety of municipal workers, limits the potential for claims against negligence, litigation and financial liability, and also demonstrates to the community at large that the City is a leader in the stewardship of our natural resources.

Precautionary Principle: When an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically.

In this context the proponent of an activity, rather than the public, should bear the burden of proof.

The process of applying the Precautionary Principle must be open, informed and democratic and must include potentially affected parties. It must also involve an examination of the full range of alternatives, including no action.

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Resources

NOFA Standards for Organic Land Care http://organiclandcare.net/sites/default/files/nofa_organic_land_care_standards_6thedition_2017_opt.pdf

OMRI Lists <https://www.omri.org/omri-lists>

Active Ingredients Eligible for Minimum Risk Pesticide Products <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-12/documents/minrisk-active-ingredients-tolerances-2015-12-15.pdf>

Inert Ingredients Eligible for FIFRA 25(b) Pesticide Products https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-11/documents/minrisk_inert_ingredients_w_tolerances_2016-11-16.pdf

Beyond Pesticides Products Compatible With Organic Landscape Management <https://www.beyondpesticides.org/programs/lawns-and-landscapes/tools-for-change/products-compatible-with-organic-landscape-management>

NTC Facts About Neonicotinoid Insecticides http://www.nontoxiccommunities.com/uploads/7/0/8/2/7082006/factsaboutneonicotinoid_insecticides_.pdf

NTC Facts about Fertilizers <http://www.nontoxiccommunities.com/uploads/7/0/8/2/7082006/fertilizersfactsheetntc.pdf>

California Native Plant Society Native Plant Landscaping to Reduce Wildfire Risk <https://interwork.sdsu.edu/fire/curricula/documents/NativePlantstoReduceFireRisk.pdf>

Exotic plants reduce carbon sequestration <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/368/6494/967>

National Audubon Society Why Native Plants Matter <https://www.audubon.org/content/why-native-plants-matter>



For more information on cities that have organic policies in place, and to find help to pass one where you live, visit www.NonToxicCommunities.com.

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