

Organic Integrated Pest Management Policy for Land Owned by the Town of Wellesley, Massachusetts

Land owners include:

**Natural Resources Commission
School Department
Board of Selectmen
Library trustees**

Section I Statement on pesticides

Findings and purpose

That Town of Wellesley Natural Resources Commission believes 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; and

The Town of Wellesley Natural Resources Commission recognizes that all its citizens, particularly children, have every right to protection from exposure to hazardous chemicals in pesticides in particular; and

The Town of Wellesley Natural Resources Commission recognizes that it is in the best interest of public health to take precautionary action to protect our citizens and their drinking water by reducing the use of toxic pesticides in Wellesley; and

A balanced and healthy ecosystem is vital to the health of the town and its citizens: and as such it is also in need of protection from exposure to hazardous chemicals and pesticides; and

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; and

It is in the best interest of public health to eliminate the use of toxic pesticides on town owned land, ponds and waterways; 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.

Accordingly, the Town of Wellesley Natural Resources Commission finds and declares that the purposes of this Organic Integrated Pest Management policy are:

1. To protect the public health by restricting the use of hazardous chemicals and pesticides on town owned land.
2. To guarantee the rights of the residents of the Town of Wellesley the safe use of public land.
3. To encourage the reduction and elimination of the use of toxic pesticides on private property.

Section II Definitions

Pests are and may be known as undesirable plants, insects, fungi, bacteria, rodents, birds, and other animals. Common examples in turfgrass 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 Agriculture Pesticide Bureau 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 have the potential to impair human health. Pesticides is the umbrella term. Herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, miticides, and avicides, and rodenticides are all considered pesticides.

Organic IPM is a problem-solving strategy that prioritizes a natural, organic approach to turfgrass 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.

The US EPA and CDC recommend the use of an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program by local governments. IPM promotes the use of nonchemical methods for pest prevention and management, such as physical, mechanical, cultural, and biological controls. Least toxic pesticides maybe selected for pest control only after all other reasonable nonchemical methods have been exhausted. The use of even allowed pest control products should be used on a rescue basis as opposed to incorporation into routine management programs.

This approach will eliminate or significantly reduce the use of, and exposure to, pesticides in the management of lawn areas, playing fields, and landscapes.

Furthermore, it will mitigate the potentially negative impact of landscape management on local waterways, air quality, and ecosystems.

This protocol will rely on a systems approach that integrates soil health and plant vigor with proper cultural practices. The goal is to put a series of preventative steps in place that can naturally attenuate pest issues before they become a significant concern. Careful monitoring for pests and the development of the threshold levels within this system will allow for easier control of pest problems, if and when they do arise. This protocol is knowledge-based utilizing an intimate understanding of soil dynamics, grass biology, and pest/disease morphology to establish the proper procedures for maximizing the health of the landscape. This protocol should mitigate most serious pest pressures.

When a pest has not been satisfactorily controlled by the above strategies, the rescue approach follows the path to the use of the least toxic pesticides. Recommendations are for the use of Federal Insecticide Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) Section 25 (b) Minimum Risk Pesticides listed by the US Environmental Protection Agency. We can also use materials that are bio-rational in nature. These bio-rational pesticides are EPA registered, but they are approved for organic production. They have been approved by the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) or an equivalent certifying body.

Essential Organic Integrated Pest Management practices include, but are not limited to:

Regular soil testing.

The addition of approved materials for soil fertility and amendment as necessitated by soil test results.

Selection of plantings using criteria of hardiness; suitability to native conditions; draft, 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 the enhancement of the environment of a pest's natural enemy.

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.

Precautionary principle

The precautionary principle (or precautionary approach) to risk management states that if an action or policy has a suspected risk of causing harm to the public, or to the environment, in the absence of scientific consensus (that the action or policy is not harmful), the burden of proof that it is *not* harmful falls on those taking an action that may or may not be a risk.

The principle is used by policy makers to justify discretionary decisions in situations where there is the possibility of harm from making a certain decision (e.g. taking a particular course of action) when extensive scientific knowledge on the matter is lacking. The principle implies that there is a social responsibility to protect the public from exposure to harm, when scientific investigation has found a plausible risk. These protections can be relaxed only if further scientific findings emerge that provide sound evidence that no harm will result.

Section III Prohibitions

- The use and application of toxic chemical pesticides, either by the Town of Wellesley employees or by private contractors is prohibited on all Town of Wellesley lands, including school fields which shall comply with the School Children and Families Protection Act
- Preemptive turf, landscape and grounds cultural, biological, and physical maintenance practices shall be undertaken to understand prevent and control potential pest problems
- All control products used under the term of this policy shall be in keeping with, but not limited to, those products on the preferred list of the Northeast Organic Farmers Association Organic Landcare Program (NOFA OLC) as stated in their Standards for Organic Landcare, and or the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) of Eugene, Oregon, or an equivalent certifying agency.
- Any pesticides shall be applied only by a certified applicator.

Section IV Exemptions

All outdoor pest management activities taking place on Town of Wellesley land shall be subject to this Organic IPM policy, except as follows:

1. Pesticides otherwise lawfully used for the purpose of maintaining a safe drinking water supply at a drinking water treatment plant and at wastewater treatment plants and related collections, 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 40 CFR 152.25, Section 25 (b) or those pesticides of a character not requiring FIFRA regulation.

4. Pesticides that are EPA registered but are considered bio-rational in nature and are on the approved list.

Section V Emergency waivers

If an emergency public health situation warrants the use of pesticides which would otherwise not be permitted under this Policy, the Town of Wellesley Board of Health shall have the authority to grant a temporary, one-time waiver if:

1. The pest situation poses an immediate threat to human health AND
2. Viable alternatives consistent with this Organic IPM policy do not exist.

If an emergency and environmental health situation warrants the use of pesticides which would otherwise not be permitted under this policy, the Town of Wellesley Natural Resources Commission shall have the authority to grant a temporary one-time waiver if

1. The pest situation poses an immediate threat to environmental health AND
2. Viable alternatives consistent with this Organic IPM policy do not exist.

If pesticides are used under the emergency waiver clause, the area treated shall be conspicuously sign posted as soon as possible after application and remain so for a period of at least forty-eight hours. Furthermore, the Organic IPM Advisory Committee shall be notified as soon as possible, and a specific Organic IPM plan shall be developed to prevent further such emergencies.

Section VI Non-emergency waiver

This section applies only to those properties where children do not congregate and play. All athletic fields and general play turf is subjected to this policy and cannot make use of this waiver.

The landscapes under the jurisdiction of the following Town Departments can be considered for waiver.

Board of Selectmen
Library Trustees

The above are turf and landscape areas where children do not generally congregate and play.

On those properties, if a condition presents itself that might realize an end result of economic injury or a significant loss of aesthetic characteristics, a waiver process may be initiated.

It should be understood that a definition of aesthetic quality is not 100% weed free turf,

100% of the time, but rather an appropriate determination that establishes an Organic IPM threshold of 5% weed pressures or less as being acceptable. This threshold is realistic and appropriate for the managed landscape.

Section VII Advisory Committee

When necessary, an Organic IPM Advisory Committee shall be created to oversee and assist in the implementation of the Organic IPM Policy, to maintain an organic IPM program consistent with this policy, and to assist the Town of Wellesley departments in achieving the full and successful implementation of this policy.

In addition, their duties should include:

- Maintain the existing Natural Turf Management plan for athletic fields consistent with this policy
- Continue to maintain a registry of all pesticides currently stored on Town owned premises, with a goal of proper disposal to a hazardous waste collection program.
- Ensure that the Town compost be tested on a yearly basis for contaminants, including, but not limited to, heavy metals and pesticides.
- Ensure that the Town water be tested for pesticides at least every three years based upon recommendations by the Organic IPM Advisory Committee.
- Ensure that the Town of Wellesley employees who work with turf, landscape, or grounds receive yearly education and training in natural, organic turf, landscape, and grounds management.

The advisory committee will seek a broad community participation on a nonvoting basis. Membership on the Organic IPM Advisory Committee should be comprised of a representative from each of the following:

- Town of Wellesley, Board of Health
- Town of Wellesley, Natural Resources Commission
- Town of Wellesley, School Department
- Town of Wellesley, Recreation Department
- Town of Wellesley, Department of Public Works
- Town of Wellesley, Board of Selectmen
- Town of Wellesley, Playing fields task force
- Up to three citizen representatives, knowledgeable about environmental toxins and or Organic Integrated Pest Management techniques and protocols