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Do Master Gardener Volunteers Help Maine?

June 8, 2017 at 12:33 pm

To the editor:

Does the University of Maine's Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program help Maine?

Ask the hungry people who received over 250,000 pounds of food grown last year by master gardener volunteers whose work growing fruits and vegetables supported food pantries across the state. Ask the 1,500 schoolchildren who learned about growing their own food. Ask the people who benefit from over 80 community gardens and 86 school gardens that teach where healthy food comes from and how to grow their own food.

In a world of shifting demands for food, changing environments, and mounting pressures, the skills of citizens are being put to the test. In the Master Gardener Volunteer Program, participants explore methods for

dealing with soil, composting challenges, pests, and the countless and evolving varieties of vegetables and fruits that may be grown successfully in Maine.

Master gardener volunteers also gain a greater understanding of integrated pest management, pesticide use, and pruning, and learn to identify the characteristics of high-performing, productive gardens.

What do the master gardener volunteers get out of volunteering? Well, there are lessons learned, laughter and friendships made that make the time and effort worthwhile. The joy of sharing gardening ideas or building a twig trellis with new friends while outside is hard to match among life's simple pleasures, along with helping our communities thrive.

A powerful lesson is how effective, engaging, and exceptional the University of Maine's extension professors are; the reach and talent of our educators and groundbreaking researchers at the university level are something we should all be proud of.

Notably, Drs. David Hanley and Mark Hutton are in demand for their expertise – around the world – in growing vegetables and small fruits. Dr. Renae Moran is renowned for her work with fruit trees. Professor Mark Hutchinson, another notable agricultural industry expert, supervises the Knox/Lincoln/Waldo counties Master Gardener Volunteer Program. The ever-capable and indefatigable Elizabeth Stanley manages and organizes the logistics, and is the heart and soul of the Knox/Lincoln/Waldo program by making the volunteers feel welcome and supported.

The Master Gardener Volunteer Program not only leverages the talent of our university professors, but also draws in the skills and knowledge of our government employees. Megan Patterson, of the Board of Pesticides Control, teams up with her colleagues at the Board of Pesticides Control to ensure the master gardener volunteers fully understand the implications of using pesticides in our community garden projects and our homes, as well as to explain the laws surrounding applications of pesticides.

The world has no shortage of problems, and a handful of people can and do make our communities a little better. We hope that you will consider becoming a master gardener volunteer or donating to this worthwhile program at goo.gl/khqYD0. To find out more about the program, visit the Maine Master Gardener Volunteers' website at goo.gl/NMSW12.

With respect, deep appreciation, and gratitude, the Knox/Lincoln/Waldo
Counties Master Gardener Volunteer Class of 2016-2017:

Claire Adams, Appleton

Bill Bausch, Damariscotta

Mary Davis, Belfast

Amy Fischer, Camden

Irene Gerny, Boothbay

Anne Goodale, Tenants Harbor

Jack Green, Union

Kent Harlow, Lincolnville

Karen Jordan, Spruce Head

Marianne McKinney, Belfast

Aimee Moffitt-Mercer, Monroe

Gail Presley, Rockland

Wendy Roberts, Cushing

Kim Sullivan, Newcastle-Damariscotta

Erika Taylor, Union

Christina Vincent, North Haven

Gabrielle Wicklow, Camden

September 6, 2017

TO: Maine Board of Pesticides Control

RE: Typed Transcript (verbatim) of Handwritten Statement
Code No. 170609 JTP02 A

I have a regular appointment on Tuesday mornings from 8 to 9 at a fitness studio - Impact Fitness - at the corner of Union Street in Camden and a private road to the Quarry Hill Retirement Community. I left early, at about 8:45, and, as I headed for the exit door, remarked to the trainer, Matt Merrifield, "What's what loud noise!".

I opened the door to head for my car and, looking to my right, realized it came from a spray rig. Two men, heading down the hill toward Union Street, were spraying the grass along the Quarry Hill roadside, and the spray (due to the very gusting wind) was visible and drifting in a cloud toward and over the Impact Fitness parking area - and over me!

The odor told me they were spraying an herbicide or pesticide. They looked like a couple of dubs. One driving the tank equipment (with no protective gear), the other following with the spray wand (and wearing only a white particle mask).

My husband and I own Treekeepers LLC of Camden, an arboriculture company. I am a Maine licensed arborist. He (Douglas N. Johnson) is Maine licensed and ISA certified. We (Treekeepers) is also a licensed commercial pesticide applicator, although we use only organic insect and disease controls, and only for our arboriculture clients - as a special service to them.

When my husband applies controls, he wears a white disposable protective jumpsuit and a respirator. This is why I knew they must be in violation. No company should be spraying with winds gusting like they were yesterday morning.

I got into my car (2015 Honda Accord), pulled out of the parking lot, and began gesturing to the applicator, tooting lightly on the horn. He finally approached my car and I rolled down the passenger window. "Are you a licensed commercial applicator?" I asked. "Yes," he replied. "What company?" I asked. (Until then I'd assumed they must be groundspeople who worked for Quarry Hill.) "Sports Fields," he answered. I said, "Well, if you are a commercial applicator, you should know you shouldn't be spraying in this wind!" He made a remark to the effect that he had checked the wind and it was fine.

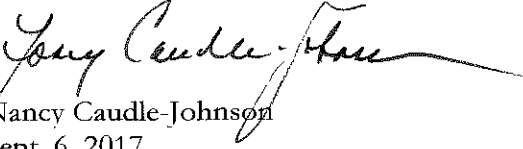
I drove the short distance home and phoned Quarry Hill, asking to speak with the Director. I was transferred to Mary Sargent, the Executive Director. I told her what had transpired and suggested she stop them spraying right away because they shouldn't be doing it in the wind. She said she would contact the facilities manager. I asked her to phone me once she learned what they were spraying, because I had been enveloped in a cloud of it.

I immediately made detailed notes about what had transpired.

I then phoned the Bureau of Pesticides and left a message for Ray Connors (?), the Manager of Compliance.

Around midday, Mary Sargent left a voice mail message that they had been spraying herbicides - Milenium Ultra and Confront.

In my personal opinion, Quarry Hill should be more vigilant about what they use on their trees, shrubs, and grass. After all, their parent company is Pen Bay Health Care and their residents are the elderly who (mostly) have compromised immune systems.


Nancy Caudle-Johnson
Sept. 6, 2017

-End-

Maine Voices: Portland task force's pesticide ordinance is full of loopholes

 www.pressherald.com/2017/07/18/maine-voices-portland-task-force-pesticide-ordinance-is-full-of-loopholes/

By Jody Spear Special to the Press Herald

HARBORSIDE — Anyone who has followed the Portland City Council task force deliberations on a pesticide ordinance over the last year has to have been encouraged by the strong showing at [a June 21 hearing](#). Residents testifying in favor of the most protective regulations – namely, the provisos of an ordinance [enacted by South Portland last year](#) – outnumbered by 5 to 1 supporters of the chemical industry-friendly draft ordinance from the Portland task force.

The task force ordinance, which purports to be based on integrated pest management practices and to ban synthetic pesticides on public and private land, is replete with loopholes that allow insecticides, herbicides and fungicides to be used if “[the pest population exceeds acceptable safety, economic or aesthetic threshold levels](#).” Whose “aesthetic threshold”? Someone who objects to dandelions on lawns? Whose “economic threshold”? That of a playground manager who looks for the cheapest way to kill grubs and weeds regardless of [the environmental and human health consequences](#)?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jody Spear, of Harborside, is active in [Portland Protectors](#) and works on pesticide reform statewide.

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The task force also proposes waivers for undefined “[emergency](#)” situations, which would undoubtedly include the browntail-moth infestation now plaguing parts of the coast. Among the state-approved insecticides for this pest are [four neonicotinoids and three pyrethroids](#), all deadly to bees and other pollinators. [Recent evidence of the harm done by neonicotinoids](#) to both honeybee and wild bee populations makes the case for banning these insecticides in the strongest possible terms.

Although they profess adherence to integrated pest management guidelines for least-toxic products and protocols, regulators and their business allies have hijacked the concept. It now translates to intensive spraying on a schedule rather than integrated pest management. As we saw [at the hearing](#), they construct a straw-man argument based on the concept of organic pest management – the basis of the South Portland ordinance – demonizing organic products like vinegar and essential oils while ignoring the fact that organic pest management means fundamentally building healthy soil.

In addition to promoting this kind of environmentally protective land care, the South Portland ordinance stresses educating residents about organic pest management; [Portland's proposed ordinance does not](#). Education will be critical to making residents aware of nontoxic alternatives to the insecticides being sprayed to combat the browntail moth as well as the herbicides that destroy food sources and habitat for endangered pollinators.

These poisons, along with fungicides typically used pre-emptively on golf courses, are running off into streams (five of which [are ranked](#) “impaired” in Portland) and draining into Casco Bay. Unaccountably, the flawed Portland task force draft has been endorsed by Friends of Casco Bay, whose 2001-2009 stormwater monitoring [shows](#) the many lawn and golf-course chemicals polluting the bay.

Consider how the system works now: You live on a Portland street with one or more close neighbors who contract with a landscaper for regular spraying. You're in a vulnerable subgroup, possibly with children and pets who must be kept inside while chemicals are applied and drifting close enough to you to trigger irritation and other symptoms of concern.

You can pay \$20 to be listed on a state notification registry, so that anyone within 250 feet must let you know before the exterminator's arrival on the scene. But it's a hit-or-miss system. [Pesticides are sometimes applied to the wrong property, or they drift off target, or contractors fail to provide advance notice.](#)

The white flags put up after pesticide applications – with blank spaces for notes on the chemicals used, Environmental Protection Agency registration numbers and reason for spraying – provide none of that information. Why? Neighbors and bystanders exposed involuntarily to those dangerous chemicals have a right to know what has been sprayed.

In the limited cases where South Portland grants waivers for what are deemed emergencies, full disclosure of the pesticides used is required on the warning flags and all properties sprayed under waivers are itemized in the public record.

One final reason to reject the task force proposal: It originated with Deven Morrill, a commercial applicator with Lucas Tree Experts, who also chairs the state pesticide control board. We cannot count on the oversight authority in Augusta, which is known to be more about enabling than controlling pesticide use. Instead, we need a legal framework for transitioning to organic pest management at the local level, as the South Portland model does.

Anyone who's concerned should write to members of the City Council's Sustainability Committee (Spencer Thibodeau, Belinda Ray and Jill Duson) at portlandmaine.gov and attend a council-sponsored expert panel on pesticides July 26.

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