

What is integrated pest management and how does it compare with organic pest management?

What is Integrated Pest Management (IPM)?

- IPM is a **common sense process** anyone can use to protect against pests. Every time you swat a fly, pull a weed, select disease-resistant plants for your garden, or judiciously and carefully apply a specific pesticide you're using IPM tactics that reduce the risks to people and the environment.
- IPM methods include:
 - **Cultural practices** such as mowing higher to favor grass instead of weeds
 - **Physical methods** such as pruning or installing deer fencing
 - **Biological controls** such as attracting or conserving beneficial insects and spiders
 - **Chemical methods** such as selective and careful use of pesticides.
- Prevention, monitoring and identification of pest are the cornerstones of IPM.

How Is Integrated Pest Management different than ‘Organic Pest Management’? Although the two approaches differ a bit philosophically, there is much overlap in actual practice. Both IPM practitioners and organic producers must take steps to avoid pest-friendly conditions, monitor for and accurately identify pests, and integrate combinations of pest management strategies into the production system. Under IPM, pesticides can be selected based on a number of cost and benefit criteria including proven efficacy against the pest, low environmental impact, toxicity, and cost. In organic systems, pesticides are usually, but not always, restricted to those whose active ingredients are mineral, microbe or plant-based. IPM and OPM are not mutually exclusive; to the contrary, most organic producers are active IPM users.

How Can I Tell if Foods, Goods or Services are IPM- or Organic-based? Agricultural products, such as food, can be certified as meeting national organic standards established by the USDA. Look for the official USDA Certified Organic label or tag on foods and plants. Some food processors and retailers require growers to use IPM and verify compliance through on-site audits but that information is often not readily available to consumers. Although there are not any nationally recognized IPM or OPM standards for landscaping and turf, certificate programs may offer some assurance that certified professionals are knowledgeable about IPM and/or OPM. The [Northeast Organic Farmers Association](#) (NOFA) offers an organic land care certificate. The [Maine Landscape and Nursery Association](#) (MELNA) offers the Maine Certified Landscape Professional and the Maine Certified Nursery Professional certificates which require knowledge about IPM practices. The Integrated Pest Management Institute of North America offers the ‘[GreenShield](#)’ IPM certificate program for some pest control services, such as mosquito and tick control. Find a certified service provider in your area by visiting those organizations’ websites or talk with local service providers about specific practices used to prevent, monitor and manage pests, and make informed decisions when selecting a pest management or landscaping service or product.

Learn more about IPM at www.maine.gov/IPMCouncil.