

# PRIORITY FOCUS



2008 Issue #6

February 8, 2008

## **Sustainable Cities Feature: Santa Barbara's Integrated Pest Management System**

The City of Santa Barbara boasts some of the "greenest" parks and public landscaping in California thanks to its reliance on an integrated pest-management (IPM) system instead of toxic chemicals to control weeds and eliminate pests.

The city's long history of working to enhance and preserve the natural environment formally culminated when Santa Barbara adopted its sustainable city program in 2006 to ensure that all city operations supported this goal. The city formalized its IPM approach to landscaping two years prior.

IPM uses a combination of biological, cultural, physical and chemical tools to minimize the health, environmental and financial risks associated with pest management. In short, pesticides are avoided wherever possible and only used as a last resort. The least toxic option is always the preferred method with IPM.

In the past five years, pesticide use in the city has dropped by 92 percent. In fact, 98 percent of Santa Barbara's parks are now maintained using only nontoxic methods or low hazard pesticides. For example, less than three gallons of glyphosate (Round-Up) was used in management of nearly 1900 acres of parkland in 2007.

The city uses IPM throughout the city including the airport, golf course, street landscaping, creeks, beaches, and the AC Postel Memorial Rose Garden across from Mission Santa Barbara.

Various city departments, including parks and recreation, work with a five-member citizen IPM advisory committee to implement the program. IPM techniques used in Santa Barbara include:

- Hot water/steam and green-flaming in high use parks;
- Mulching;
- Mow strips and planning bed renovations to reduce herbicide need;
- Trapping rodents at high use parks; and
- Cultural modifications to manage clover and associated bee sting hazards around pools.

Looking to expand the integrated pest management system in the city, Santa Barbara is currently investigating how increasing the bat population would reduce the need to use mosquito abatement treatments. The city soon hopes to install bat nesting boxes.

The California Department of Pesticide Regulation honored Santa Barbara for its efforts with its 2007 Integrated Pest Management Innovator Award. The award, given Jan. 17 in Sacramento, was given to eight recipients. Santa Barbara is one of five cities to receive this award since 1994.

Santa Barbara has more information about the city's [sustainability activities](#) online.