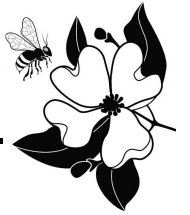




Working Toward A Pesticide-Free Islesboro



Increasingly, scientific research is showing that synthetic chemicals and fertilizers used in landscape care can be harmful to human, pet, and wildlife health and to the environment. Among the best known chemicals are glyphosate (Round-up) and 2,4-D (Scott's weed & feed products) as well as bifenthrin, which is used in tick control sprays. Twenty-nine municipalities in Maine have banned synthetic chemicals, including Portland and South Portland. A growing number of garden centers in the mid-coast region area are taking harmful products off their shelves.

Pesticide Safety on Islesboro (PSI) urges all islanders to take a natural approach in caring for their properties. Here are some tips for non-toxic landscape care and pest control.

ROUTINE LAWN CARE

During the growing season:

- Keep grass mowed to a height of at least 3" to deter weeds. Leave grass clippings, which provide nutrients.
- Avoid frequent, shallow watering, which promotes shallow root growth.

In the autumn:

- Take small samples of soil from several parts of your lawn. Mix them together and send them to the Maine Cooperative Extension for testing (there is a \$15 charge). If you need help interpreting the results, island landscapers or some garden centers can help you.
- Have your lawn aerated (several on-island landscapers have the equipment) and cover it with ½" of compost.

DRIVEWAY CARE

In the spring, apply pelletized sulfur granules to your driveway. Sulfur acidifies the driveway surface, discouraging weed growth.

During the growing season, singe weeds with a torch or make regular applications of vinegar or the following vinegar-based solution:

- 1 gallon white vinegar
- 1 cup of table salt or Epsom salts
- 1 tablespoon liquid dishwashing soap

Blend thoroughly. Most effective on young plants. Spray on a bright day and at a time when you know that there will be several consecutive days of sun.

This kills the top of the plant but will not affect the roots. The best solution for that is hand pulling or scraping with implement.

GRUB CONTROL

Dealing with grubs can be labor-intensive and costly. Current recommendations for success are to apply two biological organisms – milky spore and beneficial nematodes. Follow the package directions closely, as weather conditions and proper watering are important.

For prevention: For two consecutive years apply both milky spore and nematodes (*Heterohabditis bacteriophora*) to your entire lawn area three times – in the spring, June, and September. Milky spore can be applied in April but wait until the temperature is consistently 50 degrees or above to apply the nematodes. In June and September the milky spore and nematodes can be applied at the same time. After two years, control can last from 6-10 years.

For current infestation: In late April or early May, when it's warm enough to work outside, remove the dead grass. Spread a mixture of equal parts of loam and compost evenly over the area. Apply milky spore. Repeat application after 7-10 days. After another 7-10 days, when the temperature is consistently over 50 degrees, apply both milky spore and nematodes. Seed the area generously, cover with straw, and water daily until the seed germinates. Apply both milky spore and nematodes to the area again in late June and in September.

TICK CONTROL

Insecticides that are made from natural oils such as eucalyptus and rosemary are effective in controlling ticks. Spraying should be done by an experienced applicator who is knowledgeable about where ticks are located and sensitive to particular foliage and pollinator-friendly plants that should not be treated.

SUCCESS STORIES

Bonnet Farm has had success in eliminating large grub infestations and preventing others through applications of milky spore and beneficial nematodes.

Since 2002, Marny and Roger Heinen have never treated the Bluff Point blueberry fields with pesticides. Instead they followed the recommendations of Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) to mow the fields every three years and treat with sulfur to spread the blueberries and deter invasive grass. The fields flourished—plenty for friends and family to pick for pies, cobblers and jam. In 2018 CJ Houle delivered and tended two beehives, about 120,000 honeybees. The fields produced enough berries to feed all of Islesboro! Unlike many island hives, the Bluff Point hives survived the winter and the bees are busy now looking for early blooms. Clearly, crop yield benefited from thriving local honeybee pollinators. Honeybees have a much better chance of surviving when pesticides are absent.



Please see
www.pesticidesafetyislesboro.com
for references.

Other useful websites include:

Beyond Pesticides (www.beyondpesticides.org)
Maine Cooperative Extension (<https://extension.umaine.edu/gardening>)
Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
(<https://maine.gov/dacf/php/pesticides/yardscaping>)
South Portland Sustainability Office
(www.southportland.org/departments/sustainability)
Xerces Society (<https://xerces.org>)