

Maine Board of Pesticides Control
28 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

October 16, 2015

Dear Board Members,

First, I must apologize for not getting my July 7, 2015, letter to you in time for proper inclusion and consideration in the Board meeting packet. I've thought about what I tried to convey to you quite a bit since then, and have a few more thoughts and ideas I would like to share with you. I am therefore resubmitting my original letter of July 7, followed by more specific suggestions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Paul

Paul Schlein
Arrowsic, Maine

----- Forwarded message -----
From: Paul Schlein <pschlein@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, Jul 7, 2015 at 5:04 PM
Subject: Pesticide Lawn Applications
To: Henry Jennings <henry.jennings@maine.gov>

Dear Henry,

In reading through the agenda for this Friday's Board meeting, I found item number 6, the letter from Justin Nichols (http://www.maine.gov/dacf/php/pesticides/documents2/bd_mtgs/jul15/Nichols_letter_to_BPC.pdf), quite disturbing. Quite honestly, it sickened me to read it, and I was left with a strong feeling of anger and frustration. Four herbicides and an insecticide applied at the same time on a single lawn? With all the clear and effective alternatives to pesticide use for lawn care and maintenance, it's unimaginable, and should be unthinkable. Whether the posting was done properly by the applicator doesn't matter in my mind. It's that these applications are occurring at all—and on how many lawns, in how many towns, every day, in Maine?

The fact that the property owner evidently had no idea what was being applied—urea, it was thought—is also very problematic. It seems that many people having their lawns treated often have complete faith that what is being applied is completely “safe,” and so they generally don't feel the need to ask questions. If they better understood the risks and possible outcomes—all the health and environmental effects—of what is being applied, they might make a different choice. I can tell you from personal experience within my own family, that education works when the facts—and alternatives—are presented in a reasonable manner. With understanding, habits can change significantly.

What I would like to suggest is to ramp up the Board's public education component to a much higher level. The successful YardScaping program needs to be broadcast everywhere, by every means available, to everyone. I would think allocating a greater percentage of the fees that are realized from the 12,000 or so pesticide products that are registered in Maine would be more than reasonable, and would be money very well spent. This

increased effort would go a long way in advancing the Board’s statutory mission of reducing reliance on pesticides.

With public concerns about pesticide use increasing daily, and with more and more Maine municipalities passing ordinances restricting pesticide use, I think a more organized and centralized approach might be warranted. There’s no better body or agency in Maine than the Board of Pesticides Control that can address this issue appropriately and in its entirety. Municipalities make their best efforts, but are often lacking in resources and overall knowledge to tackle all the intricacies surrounding pesticides. With all this in mind, having this topic become a top priority for the Board would not only be in the public’s best interest, but could also save municipalities significant amounts of time and money in not having to address this themselves. (I can tell you that my town is considering an ordinance right now, as are many other and larger towns.)

In closing, I believe the Town of Ogunquit had the right idea in passing their ordinance, but it’s only a first step. I think this needs to be taken up at the state level, by the Board and/or Legislature.

Please, if possible, include this for review and consideration under agenda item 6 in Friday’s Board packet.

I will leave you with the quote that most influenced my thinking on this subject:

“I advocate the ‘Freedom Lawn’ approach on my property—allowing a wide diversity of perennial grasses and other herbaceous plants to dominate the lawn. I believe this is better for the overall ecology of the lawn and supportive of a greater overall biodiversity on my land. I will mow at least once every two weeks at 4”, sometimes once a week during very rapid growth periods, and return the clippings back into the lawn using a mulching mower. I never water my lawn and allow nature to take its course during dry periods. I overseed fescues (both fine and turf-type) and white clover into my yard, especially those areas that are thin due to poor tolerance of the existing species to low fertility, water stress, or shade. I only apply fertilizers to newly seeded areas. Once established, they rarely ever see a fertilizer again. Compared to some of my neighbors who choose a higher management approach to their lawn areas, my lawn is very comparable to theirs in quality and aesthetic appeal. I firmly believe that low-input lawns are not necessarily low-quality.”

*Karl Guillard
Professor of Agronomy
University of Connecticut*

Respectfully,
Paul

Paul Schlein
Arrowsic, Maine

10/16/15

Additional suggestions relating to my original July 7 letter:

- Bolster sustainable and low-risk programs and practices.
 - The YardScaping program, created, spearheaded, and coordinated by the BPC, in partnership with the Friends of Casco Bay, is one of the centerpieces of the Board’s public education program that embodies and exemplifies a critical part of the “minimize reliance” mission. However, the program

and the demonstration gardens at the Back Cove in Portland are underfunded, understaffed, and continue on a fraying shoestring of time and money.

YardScaping is gaining in the Maine consciousness, but, to succeed, really needs to be a common noun and verb in Mainer's vocabulary. For this to happen, a significant infusion of both personnel and funding will be needed. Based on more than eight years of involvement in this program on my part, I've identified and listed below what I think are some essential things that must happen to ensure not just the continuation of the YardScaping program, but its expansion and increased awareness on the part of Mainers. Please consider the following:

- A complete review and revamping of the YardScaping website to update and expand content and redesign the site for greater functionality. Except for occasional updates, this has not been done since the site was created more than 12 years ago:
<http://www.maine.gov/dacf/php/pesticides/yardscaping/index.htm>.
 - Printing of the new YardScaping booklet, only available now in digital form:
http://www.maine.gov/dacf/php/pesticides/yardscaping/documents/New_YardScaping_Booklet.pdf.
 - Reprinting of the very popular YardScaping lawn signs. The supply was exhausted several years ago, and there's a list of people waiting to receive them:
<http://www.maine.gov/dacf/php/pesticides/yardscaping/involved.htm>.
 - Creation of an online video to further advance the educational aspects of the YardScaping Gardens at Back Cove.
- The Board's *GotPests?* website (<http://www.maine.gov/dacf/php/gotpests/index.html>), one of the best and most informative sites of its kind, is a key source of information for homeowners and professionals, and focuses on sustainable practices. While the site was entirely redesigned and redone about five years ago, it is in need of updating and regular maintenance.
 - Creation of a full-time or, at a minimum, part-time position that focuses solely on public education and outreach. Responsibilities could include coordination of the YardScaping program, the YardScaping Gardens at Back Cove, and volunteer activities; maintenance of all related websites, including *GotPests?*; conducting regular, related training programs and workshops; attendance and exhibits at shows, workshops, and conferences.
 - Fund and launch a major statewide media campaign to promote sustainable lawncare and landscaping, highlighting the YardScaping program and *GotPests?* website.
 - Enhance existing BPC training and licensing modules, or create new ones, focusing on sustainable lawncare and landscaping practices and alternatives to pesticide use.
 - Convene a meeting with other state agencies and private interest groups to review the current status and implementation of Title 22, Section, 1471-X (<http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/22/title22sec1471-X.html>), the state policy to minimize reliance on pesticides. Evaluate present activities and determine the best approaches needed to attain the required goal.