

# Marin County Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program Our Water Our World Retail Partners Final Report

July 2020- June 2021

Contract #32100741 for Plant Harmony, prepared by Suzanne Bontempo

# Program overview:

We currently are providing OWOW partnership services to 15 retail businesses.

1) Building Supply	Point Reyes Station
2) Chase Ace	San Rafael
3) CNL Nursery	Mill Valley
4) Fairfax Lumber	Fairfax
5) Fairfax Backyard Farmer	Fairfax
6) Goodman's Building Supply	Mill Valley
7) The Home Depot	San Rafael
8) Jackson's Hardware	San Rafael
9) Marin Ace	San Rafael
10) Pini Hardware	Novato
11) Sloat Garden Center	E. Blithdale, Mill Valley
12) Sloat Garden Center	Kentfield
13) Sloat Garden Center	Miller Ave, Mill Valley
14) Sloat Garden Center	Novato
15) Toby's Feed Barn	Point Reyes Station

# **Retail Store Mentoring and Maintenance Visits:**

A total number of 69 program store mentoring and maintenance visits were provided for the year.

Building Supply: 3 visits
Chase Ace: 6 visits
CNL Nursery: 5 visits
Fairfax Lumber: 4 visits

Fairfax Backyard Farmer: 3 visitsGoodman's Building Supply: 8 visits

The Home Depot: 6 visitsJackson's Hardware: 3 visits

Marin Ace: 5 visits
Pini Hardware: 4 visits
Sloat, E. Blithdale: 5 visits
Sloat, Kentfield: 5 visits
Sloat, Miller Ave: 5 visits
Sloat, Novato: 4 visits
Toby's Feed Barn: 3 visits

Store mentoring and maintenance activities throughout the year:

- Replenish fact sheets
- Update shelf talkers on new products
- Ask associates if they are hearing of any new or unusual pest problems from their customers
- Focus on the pest of the month calendar
- Bring the quarterly UCIPM Retail Newsletter to each retailer
- Remind associates about the resource on the OWOW & UCIPM website
- Demonstrate how to use the UCIPM website for pest problem assistance
- Guide customers to less-toxic solutions in the aisle
- Mentor buyer and manager at each retailer about new eco-friendly product on the market
- Mentor associates about the current pest problems and IPM strategies for the pests
- Mentor associates on how less toxic active ingredients work
- Follow up with emails and phone calls on pest questions from associates, as well as customers

Many of the retail partners have witnessed an increase in sales with the eco-friendly alternative pesticides. Even throughout the challenging year of covid restrictions and an early spring season, we see that people are looking for alternative to the toxic pesticides. This is trending up throughout the retail markets. Many of the retailers have increased the number of eco-pesticides as they replace problem pesticides with these alternatives.

I continue to work with the Home Depot corporate to keep them up to date on store activates and events. We discussed additional ways to expand our partnership. The sale of eco-friendly products still remains strong. The Home Depot stores has increased the number of eco-products by roughly 25% and the sales of Orthro's 3-in-1, pyrethrin and sulfur eco-pesticide was up 17%. This is phenomenal. The definitely is a reflection of consumer demand, that eco-friendly pesticides are more popular than ever.

Throughout the year, I provided each store with support around assorted seasonal pest, such as aphids, earwigs, and cucumber beetle, along with leaf and plant diseases, especially powdery mildew, due to the dry conditions. Yellowjackets, gophers, rats & mice were also highlighted with many customers coming in the stores with these pests.

I provided each retailer with additional support with specific pest questions and product sourcing due to supply chain breakdowns. Codling Moth traps and Cucumber Beetle traps were challenging to find for the retailers this year. Through the network of vendors, I was able to find alternatives to hard-to-find products.

#### Extra educational materials:

I provided many of the OWOW retail partners additional educational materials to assist with pest identification, as this is what many were requesting since access to online research during business hours is limited to many associates. I gave CNL & the Fairfax Backyard Farmer the 'Meet the Beneficials' laminated poster and the UCANR Pest Identification Wheels.

I provided each retailer with the current publication of the UC IPM Retailer Newsletter, IPM for Cucumber Beetles, 10 Tips for Waterwise Gardening, Protecting Gardens in a Drought, and IPM for Powdery Mildew.





Fairfax Backyard Farmer with poster on display and CNL associates with the extra materials









UCIPM Newsletter with OWOW IPM educational handouts

#### Educational materials were:

- The UCIPM –ANR Pest Identifier and the Weed Identifier wheels
- UCIPM Pests of Landscape Trees and Shrubs
- UCIPM Pests of Gardens and Small Farms

UCIPM Wildlife Pest Control around Gardens and Homes

# **OWOW IPM Retailer Trainings**

# **OWOW** retailer trainings:

I conducted 8 training events were provided throughout the contract year.

Date	Store	Number Trained
8/27/20	Goodman's	5
10/20/20	Chase Ace	9
11/13/20	Marin Ace	3
2/3/21	Chase Ace	8
3/11/21	The Home Depot	11
4/25/21	Sloat Miller Ave	4
5/5/21	CNL	7
5/17/21	Goodman's	2
	Total associates trained:	49

# Topics covered in the training:

- An OWOW partnership program overview
- Pesticides that are water pollutants of concern
- Where to dispose of local HHW
- 'How less-toxic products' work
- How to read a pesticide label
- IPM principles & techniques
- Beneficial Insect Identification
- Water Conservation
- Benefits of Compost
- Benefits of Mulch
- Water-wise plant choices for our area
- Pests highlighted: Aphids, ants, powdery mildew, citrus leaf miner, earwigs, fleas, gophers, rats & mice, snails & slugs, spider mites, whitefly, fungal diseases, codling moth, rose care without problem pesticides and how to address the many customer habits, such as how over fertilizing can increase pest populations. Also, the importance of adding compost to the soil and protecting the soil with a layer of mulch.
- Invasive pests: Asian Citrus Psyllid
- OWOW website, UC Davis IPM website, BIRC website
- The UC IPM You Tube informational channel

# Resources provided to each OWOW training attendee includes:

- The Mac's Field Guide Good Garden Bugs of California
- Monthly Pest Calendar
- How to Apply Beneficial Nematode
- 'How Less Toxic Products Work' handout
- Home Depot less toxic product list for the Home Depot Store training
- List of websites, books, and catalogs on a resource sheet

- Sheet Mulching instructions
- The CA DPR's 'How to read a pesticide label' handout
- Information on pest problem solving for the following pests: spider mites, lifecycle
  of grubs, whiteflies, spider mites, citrus leaf miner, codling moth, keeping rodent
  out of the home and reducing their activity in the garden, Asian Citrus Psyllid,
  and the UCIPM Quick tips for Mealybugs & Powdery Mildew
- '10 Most Wanted Bugs for Your Garden' brochure
- OWOW pocket guides
- Marin-Sonoma Vector Control Program
- A one sheet informational handout on 'Protecting Landscapes in a Drought' and '10 Tips for Water-wise Gardening'

# Compilation of Training Feedback 2020-21 contract year

Scheduling associate trainings for the retailer partners was challenging with the ongoing restrictions from Covid-19. When these restrictions started to lessen, a few of the retailers were too busy due to the early spring rush to schedule time for the OWOW training.

The training classes are well received by the associates, as they see the value and appreciate the up-to-date IPM education I provide to them. This year specifically, with the increase of new gardeners, I focused my attention on how to guide their customers, these new gardeners, through the importance of adding compost to the soil, feeding plants organically, protecting the soil with mulch, and how to water to grow healthy plants, because when we grow healthy plants, they are more resilient and less likely to be affected by pest issues.

The more resent interests have been on how to protect gardens in times of drought. Here I share resources and information about how to be very strategic with water, ways to recycle water such as easy to install laundry to landscape greywater systems, and products on the market to protect the plants with anti-transpiriants and water retaining soil polymers.

In total, over last the 2020-21 fiscal contract year, 8 trainings were conducted with 49 associates trained, 49 surveys were collected.







# Summary of Store Training Pre-Training Surveys

A total of 8 trainings were conducted, 49 associates were trained, 44 pre-training surveys were returned. Here are the results of those surveys.

Survey Question	Yes	No	Don't Know
When water enters a storm drain, does it go to a treatment plant before it reaches a creek?	20%	55%	25%
When water enters a sanitary sewer from a house drain, like your sink or toilet, are pesticides removed at the sewage treatment plant before the treated water reaches a creek or bay?	36%	36%	28%
Is it more effective to treat an ant infestation with a bait station rather than a spray?	52%	11%	37%
Where is your local household hazardous waste collection facility located?	27% knew the location		73% did not know or left it blank

# Which sentence best describes Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

- a. IPM only uses pesticides: 0%
- b. IPM uses pest identification, trapping, beneficial insects, and pesticides (only when needed): 70%
- c. IPM does not rely on identifying pests/disease before treating: 7%
- > Left blank r did not know: 23%

# Which of these is the most effective IPM method for managing aphids?

- a. Apply fast acting fertilizers: 9%
- b. Spray insecticidal soap and/or prevent ants from vegetation with tanglefoot or bait station: 52%
- c. Use products with pyrethroids: 9%
- > Left blank or did not know: 30%

# Summary of Store Training Post-Training Surveys

A total of 8 trainings were conducted, 49 associates were trained, 44 pre-training surveys were returned. Here are the results of those surveys.

Survey Question	Yes	No	Don't Know
When water enters a storm drain, does it go to a treatment plant before it reaches a creek?		98%	2%
When water enters a sanitary sewer from a house drain, like your sink or toilet, are pesticides removed at the sewage treatment plant before the treated water reaches a creek or bay?	4%	96%	
Is it more effective to treat an ant infestation with a bait station rather than a spray?	98%	2%	
Where is your local household hazardous waste collection facility located?	98% knew the location		2% did not know or left it blank

# Which sentence best describes Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

- a. IPM only uses pesticides: 0%
- b. IPM uses pest identification, trapping, beneficial insects, and pesticides (only when needed): 100%
- c. IPM does not rely on identifying pests/disease before treating: 0%
- > Left blank or did not know: 0%

# Which of these is the most effective IPM method for managing aphids?

- a. Apply fast acting fertilizers: 0%
- b. Spray insecticidal soap and/or prevent ants from vegetation with tanglefoot or bait station: 100%
- c. Use products with pyrethroids: 0%
- > Left blank or did not know: 0%

# **Summary of End of Training Evaluation Form**

A total of 8 trainings were conducted, 49 associates were trained, 44 pre-training evaluations were returned. Here are the results.

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
I learned at least one eco-friendly pest management method today		2%	98%
The training will help me recommend and/or sell eco-friendly products		2%	98%
I can comfortably share what I learned with customers and/or co-workers		4%	96%
I can easily use the Our Water – Our World shelf tags and fact sheets to inform customers about less-toxic pest management	2%	11%	87%
Printed resource materials from this training were	Too much 4%	Just Right 96%	

# What part of the training was most helpful?

All was helpful: 55%

Pest problem solving: 29%

Product information/how they work: 13%

Time for Q&A: 3%

# What part of the training could be improved?

Nothing/everything was good: 97% More time for the training: 3%

#### Additional comments:

"Awesome teacher"

"I learned a lot"

"She really tailored the class to us"

"Too many handouts-not ecofriendly"

"Training was well planned & executed"

"The instructor did a great job"

"Suzanne is amazing!"

#### Summary of the OWOW Outreach Events for the 2020-21 contract year

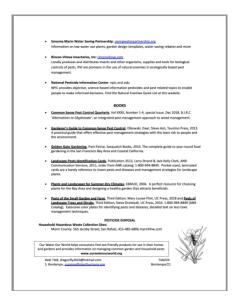
Throughout the year, I provided 13 outreach events: 12 virtual and 1 in-person, reaching a total of 1783 people with the OWOW IPM message.

#### Virtual events for the public:

Throughout the year, I provided 12 outreach events, reaching a total of at least 1755 people with the OWOW IPM message. The virtual education for the public proved to reach beyond what I had imagined, by far the most successful of any other county in part to the valuable partnerships of Sloat Garden Center, Yard Smart Marin and the UC Marin Master Gardeners. It's been incredible to have this opportunity to deliver the OWOW message to such a broad reach.

Each registrant received an email from me that included a program outline, and a 'Helpful Gardening Resource' page. This was created to help the guest with writing notes and help them pay attention without needing to scramble to note each website references throughout the program. Here is the 'Helpful Resources' I created for the webinars in partnership with the Marin Master Gardeners and Yard Smart Marin.





#### Webinars provided throughout the year:

- 1/9: 'Winter Garden Essentials' 345 attended, this webinar was in partnership with Sloat Garden Center
- 1/16: 'Compost & Soil Health Basics' 190 attended, this webinar was in partnership with Sloat Garden Center
- 2/6: 'Fertilizing Basics' 135 attended, this webinar was in partnership with Sloat Garden Center
- 2/13: 'Keeping Rats & Mice Out' 168 attended, this webinar was in partnership with Yard Smart Marin & the UC Marin Master Gardeners
- 2/27: 'How to Manage Weeds Safely & Effectively' 80 attended, this
  webinar was in partnership with Yard Smart Marin & the UC Marin Master
  Gardeners
- 3/6: 'Waterwise Gardening 101' 155 attended, this webinar was in partnership with Sloat Garden Center

- 3/13: 'Bring in the Beneficials' 82 attended, this webinar was in partnership with Yard Smart Marin & the UC Marin Master Gardeners
- 3/20: 'Grow Your Own Organic Veggies' 126 attended, this webinar was in partnership with Sloat Garden Center
- 4/17: 'Learn to Identify Beneficial Insects' 114 attended, this webinar was in partnership with Sloat Garden Center
- 5/1: 'Eco-friendly Pest & Disease Management' 149 attended, this webinar was in partnership with Sloat Garden Center
- 5/18: 'Grow a Garden Habitat' 17 attended, this webinar was in partnership with Yard Smart Marin
- 6/2: 'Protecting the Garden During Drought' 194 attended, this webinar was in partnership with Sloat Garden Center

# In-person tabling:

I did provide an in-person tabling in the aisle at Goodman's per their request, on 10/28 for their annual sales event. It was not very busy at all. Many associates mentioned that though the season had been busy, many customers are ordering for pick-up or delivery due to covid. I did assist 28 customers, assisting with their pest questions and guiding each to an eco-friendly solution for: lots of questions about rats & mice management, ants, cockroaches, flies, fungus gnats in houseplants, rose care, lawn care, and other various healthy garden care questions.



#### Social media posts:

'Pest of the Month' content for a post was provided to post on the MCSTOPPP Facebook page and Instagram feed.

- 'How to Manage Rats & Mice' posted on Facebook, 11/19/20
- 'How to use Dormant Sprays' posted on Facebook, 1/11/21
- 'How to Manage Weeds' posted on Facebook, 2/2/21
- 'How to care for Roses' posted on Facebook, 3/9/21
- 'How to Manage Aphids' posted on Facebook & Instagram, 4/12/21
- '10 tips for a Water wise Garden' posted on Facebook & Instagram, 5/21/21

# **Industry Trade Shows:**

I attended the virtual L&L Distributor Trade Show in October of 2020. I look forward to attending this trade show in person this next year.

# Overall challenge for the year:

The biggest challenges were working with each retailer in person due to covid. The labor force at most of the retailers was limited and stressed, providing OWOW displays were not an option during this time, the early spring season hit suddenly and the demand for educating the consumers, especially the new gardeners, was in demand. Thankfully I was invited to partner with Sloat, Yard Smart Marin and the Master Gardeners to provide educational webinars for the public that allowed live Q&A during each program. This was the gift that covid brought the OWOW program. Moving forward, I how we can maintain the audiences and continue to reach more people with the OWOW message.

#### Closing comments:

Each of the retailers in the partnership have been great to work with. Each of the associates I met at these stores are in full support of the OWOW program. They are seemingly open to learning about the new eco-products their retailer sells, tips for less toxic pest management, and how to better support their customers. Each year the ecofriendly product interest seems to increase, with more awareness for less toxic choices requested by the consumer.

I have not received my usual sales data yet from the Home Depot or the key vendors, which I will provide as soon as I receive it.

The associates value the OWOW partnership and support to assist them with the new products, how they work, and what product they should bring in as an alternative to the problem pesticides. In addition to mentoring retail associates, each store appreciates the assistance when helping their customers in the aisle. This support of guiding the customers to choose a product that is less-toxic, also includes other IPM tools that the retailer may sell when a pesticide isn't necessarily the best solution, such as the importance of adding compost and organic fertilizer to your soil to increase plant health, choosing water-wise plants for longer term success, and the importance of mulch for water retention and optimum soil health.

Moving forward I see the value of continuing to provide OWOW education to the public through webinar style classes as well as attending in-person events when possible.

Thank you so much for allowing me to lead the contract. I appreciate the opportunity to work with the retailers throughout Marin County.

Suzanne Bontempo