

City of Rockville

Pest Management Strategy

The City of Rockville strives to be a good steward of its environment. As such, the city employs knowledgeable staff that continually explores innovative, environmentally sensitive and cost-effective approaches to pest management.

The objective of Rockville's pest management strategy is to manage pests that may cause harm or threaten the health, aesthetic or functioning capability of a particular site, while minimizing economic, human health and environmental risk. To accomplish this, since 1996, the city has endorsed the principles of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), a widely accepted management strategy.

According to the University of Maryland, "[IPM], coordinates the use of pest biology, environmental information, and available technology to prevent unacceptable levels of pest damage— using the most economical means while posing the least possible risk to people, property, resources, and the environment. IPM provides an effective strategy for managing pests in all arenas, from commercial production, to wild lands, to developed residential and public areas" (IPM Maryland Online).

In this context, a pest can refer to weeds, insects, wildlife, fungi, bacteria or virus.

As part of the IPM process, preventative measures are taken to circumvent potential pest outbreaks. These practices include appropriate maintenance of landscapes and facilities in such a manner as to discourage pest ability to reach levels that could cause significant harm or damage.

The mere presence of a pest is not necessarily an indication of a need for control. Many pests serve as valuable food sources for beneficial organisms that are not considered pests. In many cases, beneficial organisms are able to provide natural pest control by maintaining pest populations at low enough levels to prevent serious outbreaks. Full eradication of a pest population is therefore not ideal, as it will also reduce the population of beneficial organisms near the site. Maintaining a healthy environment includes accepting the presence of some pests at tolerable levels.

When preventative measures and natural controls are not effective at suppressing a pest population to tolerable levels, control methods are considered. Action thresholds may be based on a number of factors including aesthetics, environmental damage, or economic loss. If a pest is discovered in a landscape that is not likely to cause significant long-term damage or harm, no action may be considered the most appropriate action.

If the level of a pest has been determined to exceed the tolerance threshold for a particular area, as part of the IPM strategy, City staff will consider all available options for the management of the pest. This may include physical controls such as hand-picking, pruning, or use of traps; biological control by promoting natural predators to the affected site or through the use of approved chemical control methods. While each pest situation is unique, the City relies on the informed judgment of its staff to make high-quality management decisions.

If chemical control is determined to be the most appropriate management option for a given pest situation, City staff will proceed with a method that will achieve the desired result while being thoughtful about economic, human health and environmental risk. Chemical control methods may include the use of bio-rational, reduced risk materials such as horticultural oils and soaps or may involve the use of conventional pesticides.

In this context, a conventional pesticide may refer to an insecticide, herbicide, fungicide or rodenticide.

Chemical controls are applied minimally on City landscapes but are considered a valuable tool for certain pest situations. Chemical controls are selected based on the Maryland Extension Service recommendations and consideration is given to using the least toxic material. The City adheres to all local, state and federal pesticide laws and regulations. Certified pesticide applicators are trained to apply pesticides safely and in an environmentally sensitive manner. Applicators apply the smallest dose of a pesticide that is necessary to be effective against the infestation. Spot treatment or the application of a pesticide only to affected areas, is promoted over indiscriminate spraying. In accordance with the state law, areas to be treated are posted at the time of application and remain posted for 48 hours.

For more information on IPM, please visit: <http://www.mdipm.umd.edu/index.cfm>

If you have questions or comments regarding the City's Integrated Pest Management Strategy please feel free to contact the Environmental Management Division at environment@rockvillemd.gov

Cited Resources:

IPM Maryland – Integrated Pest Management College of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

What is IPM? Retrieved 2 February 2011 from <http://www.mdipm.umd.edu/aboutIPM/index.cfm>