

**Our Water Our World Partnership Program:  
2011 Marin Employee Training and OWOW Store Set-ups**

Final Report to Marin County Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (MCSTOPPP)

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**Store Set-ups:**

General comments: Some of the stores had a few shelf talkers left from last year, but they were often faded, bent, etc. All of the labels were replaced, and this year the names of products put on the labels were printed out to give the labels a clean, professional look. During the set up at each location, I had the chance to work with customers on their choice of products. Quite a number of questions were on aphids, fungal infections, and turf problems. Each of the stores had a number of less-toxic products new to their stores, and I was able to give staff some tips on selling/using these products.

Orchard Supply Hardware, San Rafael: This store still had a rack for fact sheets, but all of the products needed to be labeled. They have a large selection of less-toxic products, including their own label on some of these products. Because of the large staff and new employees, I would recommend a staff training at this store next year if possible to get maximum buy-in to the program.

Sunnyside Nursery, San Anselmo: The manager at this store, Ross, is very interested in and supportive of the program. They have a good selection of less-toxic products and a knowledgeable staff, and had set up a couple of displays highlighting less-toxic products. I worked with a couple of staff members on how to use some of the newer products.

Goodman's Building Supply, Mill Valley: The manager, Feliciano, is very excited about the program and stocks an extensive selection of products. There is a smaller fact sheet rack here, due to space issues, so in restocking I focused on the pest issues they get the most questions about (ants, aphids, snails, mosquitoes, roses, lawns). Feliciano expressed a lot of interest in having a training done at this store in the future.

Home Depot, San Rafael: At this store I was able to move the fact sheet rack to a more prominent place near the nursery entrance, next to the pesticide aisle. The shelf talkers need to be fastened to the bottom of the shelves so that they hang below the product.

Sloat (East Blithdale), Mill Valley: This store has a great selection of less-toxic products and manager, Molly, is very committed to the program. We set up a date for a staff training, and talked about ways the OWOW program can help with publicity. The fact sheet rack is very well used at this location, in particular the sheets on snails, roses and aphids.

Sloat (Miller St), Mill Valley: A good selection of less-toxic products. I spoke with manager, Donna, about moving the location of the fact sheet rack to a more prominent place. They had a couple of displays and end caps focusing on less-toxic products and organic fertilizers.

### **Store Training:**

A store training was held on July 26<sup>th</sup> at the Sloat Nursery in Mill Valley open to employees from any of the Sloat Stores. Twelve employees signed up, and a total of nine attended. The training covered:

- OWOW background information, program goals, materials and how the store partnership works
- Watersheds and water quality issues related to pesticides and other garden products
- Identification of pests and beneficial and how to help clients target a specific pest
- Less-toxic products, how they work and how to read a label
- Tips for working with customers and making sure they know how to use products
- Pesticides of concern (including pyrethroids and imidicloprid)
- New pests, new products and marketing trends
- Resources for more information on pesticides, identifying pests, helping customers

Each employee was given a resource packet that included 10 Most Wanted Bugs in Your Garden, Growing Gardens From Garbage, Going Native, Don't Plant a Pest, Control It, and Sucking and Chewing Insect Damage. In addition, the manager was given the current list of less-toxic products and a laminated guide to identifying beneficials that can be posted in the store. At the manager's request, extra packets were left for employees that were interested in learning, but unable to attend the training.

During the training there was quite a lot of interest in watersheds and the health of the Bay, how to identify insects in the garden, and how to find the resources they need as additional questions come up.

### **Program Observations:**

- If possible, it is important to build in repeat visits to each store in the program for several reasons:
  - New products are often added to shelves as they come in through the season, so labeling products is an on-going process.
  - As staff move products around or add new products, some labels get out of place.
  - In some of the larger stores, such as the OSH stores, some of the staff are new and unfamiliar with the program and shelf talkers. Repeat visits are a great way to give them a brief introduction to the program and products.
  - Repeat visits will give you the opportunity to talk with staff about the seasonal and new pests they might be seeing and preventative measures for pests such as mosquitoes.
- One suggestion would be to provide stores with some kind of small sign or poster alerting customers to the program and how they can quickly identify less-toxic products by finding the shelf talkers.