

Contact information

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Objective and Rationale

The first year of a county-wide homeowner IPM lawn education program called Turf Love raised the issue of possible participation by landscapers and retailers. (In a 2006 survey we completed for the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, we found that landscapers in Putnam County have from 25-100 customers, thus providing a significant multiplier effect.) As we continue the Turf Love program in 2008 and beyond, we also want to educate nursery retailers and landscapers to be knowledgeable about the IPM concepts we use in Turf Love (e.g., mowing high, watering wisely, using only as much fertilizer as needed, identifying pest and disease thresholds, selecting appropriate grass varieties), so they can cooperate with homeowners who ask for low-impact products and services.

We would use this grant to fund a pilot project to educate nursery retailers and landscapers in Putnam County about the Turf Love program, what questions to expect from homeowners in the program, and how to use IPM concepts in their work.

For the pilot program, we would invite a group of nursery retailers and a group of landscapers to individual breakfast workshops in late January / early February 2008, where we will explain the Turf Love program and how homeowners participate in it. These breakfast meetings will begin our educational efforts. As an incentive to attend the meetings, we would offer a copy of "Picture Clues to Turfgrass Problems." We would ask these participants to participate in suggested core activities, such as:

Retailers: Stock zero-phosphorous fertilizers and be able to explain how to use them; be able to explain the tuna-can watering method; be able to explain how to select grass seeds for specific landscape needs; use the counter display unit we provide

Landscapers: Agree to offer soil nutrient analyses to clients before the growing season and fertilize accordingly; learn alternatives to lawn for clients with problem areas such as deep shade, steep slopes, wet soil; be willing to offer low-impact products.

We will also promote the program to professionals with table exhibits at Hudson Valley Regional Commercial Horticulture events, at the New York State Turf & Landscape Assn. annual conference and at other trade shows and workshops.

How our project fits the Water Quality goals of the Green Blue Summit

About half of Putnam County lies within the Catskill-Delaware and Croton Watersheds of the New York City reservoir system. On the west side of the county, surface waters are tributaries of the Hudson River, and there are large and ecologically significant wetlands and marshes along the river's edge and on the northeast side of the county (The Great

Swamp). It is very important that we continue educating homeowners and green industry professionals about IPM lawn care concepts, especially those designed to prevent runoff and reduce the misuse and overuse of fertilizers and pesticides.

Evaluation Plan

For the pilot program, our measure of success is two-fold. We hope to engage 40 to 65 retailers and landscapers in the County who would attend our breakfast workshop(s). We would then consider the breakfast meetings a success if at least 65% of the attendees agree to participate in the suggested core activities.

Our strategy would then be to engage more retailers and landscapers in future years by using the 2008 participants’ experience as models. If these goals are met, the over-arching goal of the Turf Love program will be to register a growing number of homeowners and professionals throughout the county, thus creating a “push-pull” marketing campaign that will increase demand for, and supply of, low-impact products and IPM-based practices.

Going forward, we will study the possibility of applying for a grant from the NYS Agricultural Worker Certification Program for training of retailers and landscapers in late 2008-early 2009.

Budget

The Green-Blue Summit grant funds would be used as follows:

Printing and postage for recruitment brochures	400.00
Envelopes & paper	75.00
Purchase and shipping of 65 copies of “Picture Clues to Turfgrass Problems”	715.00
Mileage, travel expenses (2 staff members) including training in Turf IPM/Water Quality (date & location tbd)	500.00
Printing/laminating Point-of-Purchase materials for retailers	100.00
Table exhibits/displays	325.00
Meeting costs (coffee, muffins, etc.)	<u>125.00</u>

Total **\$2,240.00**

In-kind contribution

20 hours Master Gardeners	@ \$16.00/hr	320.00
20 hours Assistant Educator	@ \$19.12	382.40
20 hours Educator	@ \$28.10	562.00

Total \$1,264.40