Team Name: Sustainable Urban Pioneers

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Yale and Pesticide Use

It was more difficult than I thought to find information about pesticide use on campus. I could not find a direct person to contact in regards to Yale Grounds Management/Landscaping online. I ended up having to email my boss at the Office of the Sustainability and spreading out a couple more feelers for more information about who to contact. Either because other students are not curious about this information or the university wants to keep the specific pesticides they use a secret, it was very hard to locate this information. I ended up reaching out to Laura Cahn, an advocate for decreasing pesticide use at Yale and sending out a couple emails to people who work at facilities.

Laura is on the Environmental Advisory Council for the City of New Haven. Laura says that she felt direct health effects as a result of pesticides being sprayed in the area. She has concerns that pesticide use will affect the health of families, animals, and the environment. Another problem is the lack of awareness, many people do not know the potential dangers of pesticide use. For residents of New Haven, Yale actually informs people that live in the surrounding area what kind of pesticides. However, it is important to recognize that the use of pesticides does not just affect students and people who live on campus, but the entire New Haven community. Laura fights for making legislative change to increase awareness and limit the use of pesticides.

On the Yale Sustainability website, I was able to find information about the University's Integrated Pest Management policy. Yale University "avoids routine pesticide applications by utilizing knowledge of pests and the local environment which allows effective monitoring of

plants and action thresholds". Yale uses a four-tiered approach to IPM: monitor and identify pests, set action thresholds, prevention, and control. Yale attempts less risky pest controls first like pheromones to disrupt mating or mechanical control. Pesticides are made as a last resort after other methods were considered. I think that Yale's policy is going in the right direction and I appreciate how they only use pesticides as a last resort. For the future, in my opinion, pesticides should not even be an option and Yale should do their best to not use pesticides at all.

An article in the student newspaper (which my roommate wrote actually!) talked about how the School of Foresty & Environmental Studies has lawns that are pesticide-free. The lawns adjacent to the school are also pesticide-free, but only as a result of the request of many faculty members. Unfortunately, the rest of the lawns on campus are not pesticide-free. Using the lawns near the Forestry School as an example of successful pest control without pesticides, Yale should make all of their spaces pesticide free.

Our campus has few native, pollinator-friendly plants (I had a hard time finding a picture of a pollinator for the Green Challenge for this day!). There are many spaces on campus that would benefit from these plants. Not only will they add more green space and make the campus beautiful, they will also promote healthy pollinators. The area behind the Forestry school, the courtyards of residential colleges, and the large green space on Cross Campus can be utilized to feature native, pollinator-friendly plants like the ones pictured below:



Pictured: Common milkweed, Northeast Wildflower, Goldenrod

Aside from the University's explicit pesticide use, some organizations are doing some fascinating projects to increase pollinators on campus. The Yale West Campus Landscape Lab hosted GrassX, a competition that invites students to explore ideas that promote native pollinators. These ideas need to provide optimal pollinator habitats, invasive species management ideas, and sustainable land use. I talked to Justin Friedberg, director of the Landscape Lab, and he said that there were some great proposals to create scalable, pollinator friendly lands. Seven urban meadows were created on campus that contains natural grasses and wildflowers. These natural flora and fauna do not require pesticides or fertilizers to grow. Less pesticide use contributes fewer chemicals in stormwater runoff and watersheds. These urban

meadows also save money for Yale because they require less fuel, less operating time, and less manual labor. Yale should expand their urban meadows and use these philosophies to govern their management of the other green spaces on campus.

Yale is one of the world's leading universities and should ban pesticides and be a role model in terms of this environmental policy. It's ironic that a university where so much research concerning pesticides and their environmental and health impacts is done uses pesticides on their campus. According to this article, pesticide-free field maintenance is initially more expensive than using chemicals, the cost is offset in the end because the grass does not need to be mowed as often. I want to continue to reach out to people to talk to them about pesticide use on campus, promote and participate in the great projects on campus that contribute to pollinator health, and educate my fellow students about the importance of biodiversity. For the sake of the long-term sustainability of our environment, Yale needs to be pesticide-free and use alternative and natural methods of control.

Email draft:

Hi,

My name is Lauren Kim and I am a sophomore at Yale. I am participating in a program called the Project Green Challenge (projectgreenchallenge.com), where students are encouraged to live more sustainable lives through daily challenges.

I was wondering if I could find out more information about what kind of pesticides, insecticides, and herbicides are currently used on campus and what purpose they are used for. I read online about Yale's Integrated Pest Management system and was wondering if I could find a year-round list of what kind of products are used at Yale. Additionally, I was wondering where I could find a list of native, pollinator-friendly plants on our campus and more information about where these plants are sourced from.

I would love to talk with someone to learn more information about pesticide use and landscaping on campus. Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you for your time.

Best,
Lauren

Sources:

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