

About the IPM Advocates Program

Helping retailers provide customers with less-toxic pest management solutions.

The IPM Advocates Program supports a corps of IPM professionals who help retail nurseries and garden centers promote less-toxic pest management practices to customers. This pilot program, started in June 2011 through a Pest Management Alliance grant from the California Department of Pesticide Regulation, is a cooperative effort between the Bay Area Stormwater Management Agencies Association (BASMAA) and the University of California Statewide IPM Program (UC IPM).

History. The successful Our Water, Our World (OWOW) Program, coordinated by BASMAA over the last decade, shows how government agencies and retailers can partner to provide information to store employees and customers. At the same time, the UC IPM program has provided cooperating retailers with research-based IPM educational materials, online training, an extensive Internet site, and informational touch-screen computer kiosks for loan.

While these efforts have been successful—as evidenced by the demand from retail stores—there are not enough professionals or consultants with IPM expertise to train thousands of retail employees and customers. And, as more traditional pesticides are being phased out or are abandoned by an increasingly “green” consumer base, there will be an increased need for accurate information on alternative practices and products for store employees, who are a primary source of pest management information for consumers. Safer, effective products are in stores now, but we need knowledgeable store employees to direct interested customers to them.

Certification Program. To address the need for IPM consultants for retail stores, the IPM Advocates Program developed a curriculum, recruited and screened qualified applicants, and implemented a year-long certificate program, which included seven weeks of classroom instruction and ten months of mentoring in select nursery and garden center stores. IPM Advocate interns assisted stores with inventory selection, in-store displays, marketing, customer outreach, and employee training workshops. At present there are no plans to conduct a second training program.

The IPM Advocates. Ten individuals successfully completed the program in June 2012 and are now Certified IPM Advocates. Most of them currently work with retail stores in Northern California on a contract basis, often supported by local stormwater agencies.

To find out more about the IPM Advocate program in general, contact info@IPMadvocates.com.

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