



Integrated Pest Management Plan

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The City of Columbia remains committed to maintaining its little to no use of pesticides on City-owned properties in order to protect the environment and safeguard community health. This Integrated Pest Management Plan (IPM) will outline the strategies and practices the City will follow to manage pests responsibly, support the vitality of public spaces, and ensure that local ecosystems remain healthy and resilient.

This plan provides guidance for the maintenance of public buildings, parks, and green spaces. It establishes procedures intended to reduce risks associated with both pest activity and pesticide use, thereby protecting the health and safety of city employees, residents, and visitors. It has been prepared in alignment with state regulations and best practices, drawing upon guidance from the South Carolina Department of Agriculture and the Department of Pesticide Regulation. By implementing this plan, the City demonstrates its commitment to safe, sustainable, and responsible pest management.

Objectives of this plan include:

- The protection of public health through practices that prioritize well-being;
- The identification, control, and management of pests & weeds on City property;
- The preservation of natural ecosystems by minimizing environmental impacts and supporting biodiversity;
- The use of the least toxic & least harmful pest control treatments available when necessary;
- The long-term sustainability of City landscapes for future generations.

Oversight of this IPM plan will be assigned to the Forestry & Beautification Superintendent, who will act as the City's IPM Coordinator. In this role, the Coordinator will ensure the plan is carried out effectively and will serve as the central point of contact for all pest management matters. Responsibilities include facilitating communication among staff, service providers, and members of the public.

The Forestry & Beautification Department will keep documentation of all pest management treatments and applications on file for a minimum of three years.

Rather than aiming for total eradication, the City of Columbia's approach emphasizes effective pest management. Complete eradication is often impractical, costly, and potentially harmful to the environment; therefore the City relies on an integrated mix of strategies to manage pests responsibly, reserving pesticide use for situations when other methods are insufficient.



Overview of IPM Strategies:

1. **Education:** Education serves as a cost-effective strategy for pest management. Sharing information that encourages behaviors like planting pest-resistant landscape plants contributes to the control of certain pests.
2. **Cultural Controls:** Cultural control methods are preventative measures that adjust the plant's environment during regular care to reduce or prevent pests.
 - a. Examples: Rotating crops to break pest's life cycles, planting pest-resistant varieties, and maintaining healthy soil through composting and mulching.
3. **Mechanical Controls:** Mechanical control options are physical methods used during routine care or maintenance that help manage, reduce, or prevent pest problems.
 - a. Examples: Removing weeds by hand, setting traps for insects or rodents, and pruning plants.
4. **Physical Controls:** Physical control options focus on eliminating or reducing the resources that pests rely on, creating an environment that is less favorable for their survival and growth.
 - a. Examples: Improving sanitation, diversifying plantings, and removing pest habitats.
5. **Biological Controls:** Biological control is a method that relies on using a pest's natural enemies to keep its population in check. This approach can take several forms: conservation, which maintains and supports existing beneficial organisms; augmentation, which boosts their numbers through artificial release; and importation which introduces effective natural enemies from other regions to manage non-native pests.
6. **Pesticide Controls:** Least toxic pesticides are defined by several key traits. They effectively control the intended pest while posing minimal short – or long-term risks to mammals. These pesticides break down quickly in the environment, target only a limited range of pests, and cause little to no harm to other, non-target organisms.

Before any pesticides are applied, all available management options will be carefully reviewed to determine the most effective and least harmful approach. The preferred method is to prevent pest problems through integrated pest management (IPM) strategies, including maintaining proper sanitation, choosing pest-resistant plants, and practicing sound horticulture care.

If it becomes necessary to use a pesticide to achieve control goals, the product selected will be the least hazardous option available. Every precaution will be taken to apply products safely and responsibly, protecting staff, the public, and the environment. The City will always use the lowest effective application rate, follow all pesticide label instructions to prevent misuse, limit pollinator exposure by avoiding pesticide applications during bloom or immediately before bloom, and provide public notice prior to any pesticide use.



Learn more about the City's Integrated Pest Management Plan or ask questions about weed, pest, or landscape management by visiting <https://cpac.columbiasc.gov/bee-city-usa-columbia-sc/>.