ANNOUNCEMENT

Please Be Patient: Weed Management Takes More Time and Resources Due to Policy Changes

March 2, 2022 -- As spring approaches, our gardens and yards will grow verdant -- and so will the weeds in Windsor's 120 acres of public parks and 28 miles of streetscape. The Town of Windsor, in close collaboration with the Sonoma County Fire District, actively manages a year-round weed-abatement program that has more than doubled in cost and resources since 2018.

Here's why: The Town can only use organic pesticides in public parks and streetscapes instead of synthetic weed killers that use glyphosate -- the active ingredient in Round-Up -- due to health concerns. (The Town does have an exemption that allows a very limited use of glyphosate on street medians and non-public areas around the wastewater treatment plant.)

Policy Changes on Weed and Pest Management

The Town's weed and pest management policy changed in September 2018, when the Windsor Town Council directed staff to stop using synthetic herbicides. In December 2018, the Town Council formally adopted an Integrated Pest Management Policy that follows the widely accepted principles of using the least toxic pest-control methods. See the policy here: https://bit.ly/32A3IPM

While the use of organic pesticides is much safer for humans and the environment, weeds – such as crabgrass, Bermuda grass, nutsedge and clover -- tend to grow back more quickly, requiring multiple applications. Organic herbicides are also more expensive to use: The Town has increased its annual weed-abatement budget from $110,000 to more than $207,000 and has hired a full-time staff employee for additional maintenance work, such as hand-pulling weeds and mulching.

To further control cost and resources, the Town also adjusted its expectations for weed abatement. These changes include allowing an increase in weed-growth height to 4 inches from 2 inches and a maximum growth width of 6 inches from 3 inches before weeds are cut down. Staff continue to experiment with approved products and alternative practices to manage bedding and weed-prone areas to achieve aesthetically acceptable results.

Weed Abatement and Fire Season

Sonoma County Fire Marshal and Division Chief Cyndi Foreman emphasized the Fire District's partnership with the Town in prioritizing the weed-abatement areas. Local parks, heavily visited open spaces, and areas adjacent to fence lines, where significant foliage tends to collect, are

always at the top of the list, she said.

“We work hand in hand with the Town on the removal of ground fuels in these areas so we can be better prepared for the upcoming 2022 fire season,” she said.

If you have questions or concerns about weed abatement, please contact Olivia Lemen, Parks and Facilities Manager, at olemen@townofwindsor.com.

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