

# Integrated Pest Management:

How to deal with problems with pests (including weeds) in a smart, safe manner

King County's informal overview of IPM characteristics

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**Integrated Pest Management (IPM)** seeks to prevent or address pest problems by employing a wide range of strategies, and using the least toxic approach that is effective. The IPM approach considers the impacts of management methods on the environment and public health. A wide array of tools are employed, as summarized below.



**Here are the most important elements of an IPM approach:**

- Develop and implement a sound written IPM policy.
- Actively manage the IPM program, including training, internal communication and sufficient resource allocation.
- Train personnel in principles of IPM programs, pest identification, pest monitoring, record keeping and evaluation.
- Keep records: track types and timing of pest problems, note treatments and their results and use the information for future reference.
- Keep buildings healthy by using barriers to pest entry and movement, moisture control and elimination of food sources.
- Keep landscapes healthy by using the right plants for the sun, water and soil conditions; choosing pest and disease resistant plants; and keeping the soil healthy.
- Build pest-control and maintenance considerations into the design of buildings and landscapes.
- Establish acceptable tolerance thresholds for pests.
- Clearly identify pests and regularly monitor where and how many pests are present.
- If a threshold is exceeded, use a variety of techniques, including cultural (e.g., enhancement of desirable vegetation to out-compete weeds), mechanical (e.g., mowing, pruning, building barriers), biological (e.g., use of a natural predator) and chemical (e.g., lures, baits, repellants, insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, and rodenticides).
- Use relatively toxic or otherwise hazardous chemicals as a last resort, only after trying and evaluating other methods; take full precautions appropriate to the chemicals used.
- Look for ways to keep track of how effective the program is, such as overall health of the landscapes; levels of insects, diseases and weeds; and perception of groundskeeping staff, public and decision-makers.
- Keep the public involved in discussion of tolerances, expectations, acceptable practices and the results of IPM efforts.

Specifics will vary with the wide variety of landscapes and facilities maintained in the region, the uses of these properties, types of pest issues present, and tolerances allowed. The key is to follow a conscious IPM approach, learn from experience, adapt the program as needed to make it work better, and focus as much as possible on prevention rather than treatment.

We are all in this together and can learn from each other. Learn [even more about IPM](#) and [safer gardening and pest control](#).

Contact us with your questions and/or experiences at (206) 263-3050.