



Professional Landscaping Survey Results: *Choosing Pesticide Free*

Purpose

The Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides (NCAP) conducted a survey in 2019 to better understand local approaches to landscape pest management. The survey focused on the most frequent and difficult pest management issues and the needs of the community of landscape and industry professionals, for education and training on pest management alternatives.

In collaboration with the Washington State Nursery and Landscaping Association (WSNLA), a survey was sent out to approximately 350 email addresses on the WSNLA listserv. The information will inform the need for new training and the gaps in resources. It also better informs our work on promoting sustainable and certified landscaping.

 **King County**
Department of
Natural Resources and Parks
Wastewater Treatment Division

This project is funded by the King County Wastewater Treatment Division. The content herein does not constitute an endorsement by King County government, its employees, or its elected and appointed officials.


NORTHWEST CENTER FOR
ALTERNATIVES TO PESTICIDES

Methods

The survey was distributed online via email by WSNLA on February 22, 2019. Potential respondents were incentivized with a chance to win free registration to a 2019 WSNLA Landscape Learning Lab event. Google Forms was used to collect responses online.

More than a month was provided for people to respond to the survey. A total of 64 survey responses were received between February 21, 2019 and March 28, 2019. The survey closed on March 30, 2019. All individual responses were kept confidential, and a summary of the collective responses is included in the following pages.

Results: Respondents

The survey respondents are geographically distributed across the state of Washington in the following counties, as well as other parts of the Northwest: King County (33%), Kitsap County (6%), various other counties in Washington (27%), and Oregon (3%). 31% of respondents did not specify their location.

When asked about what services they provide, the majority indicated that they do some type of landscape or lawn design, installation and/or maintenance. Six respondents are nurseries, five respondents provide strictly educational services, and the rest have other specialties such as container gardening, consulting, etc.

Note that the survey was distributed through WSNLA, which offers a certified sustainable landscaping certification program in Washington for professional horticulture. We expect this effected the results since about half the respondents have this certification (Figure 4).

Figure 1. What type of organization do you work for or own?

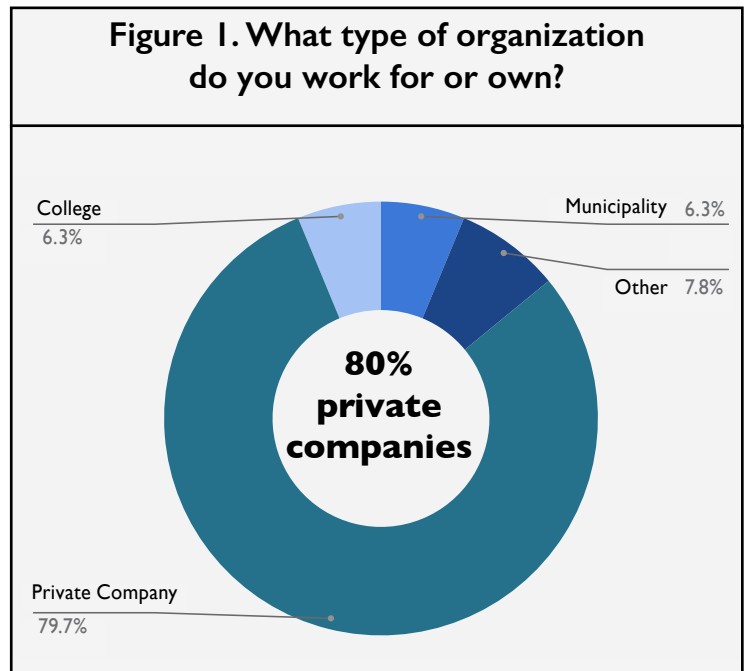


Figure 2. Private companies: How many employees do you have?

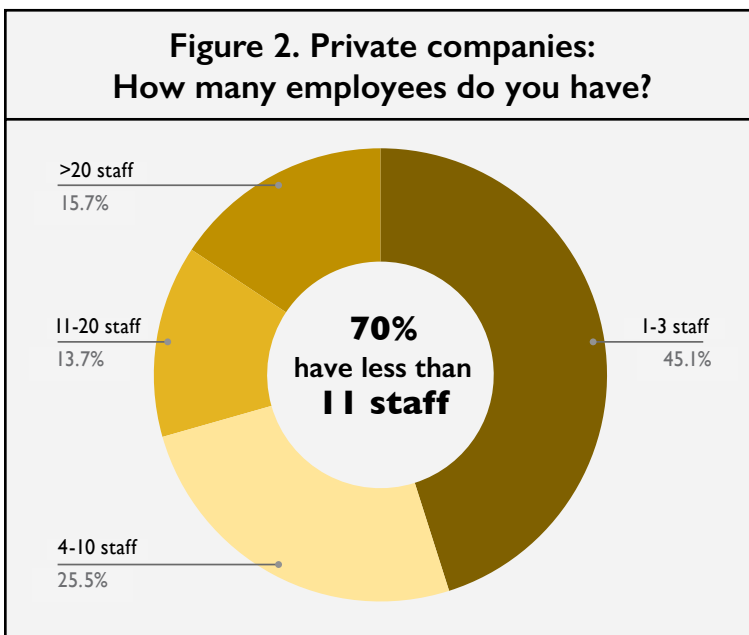
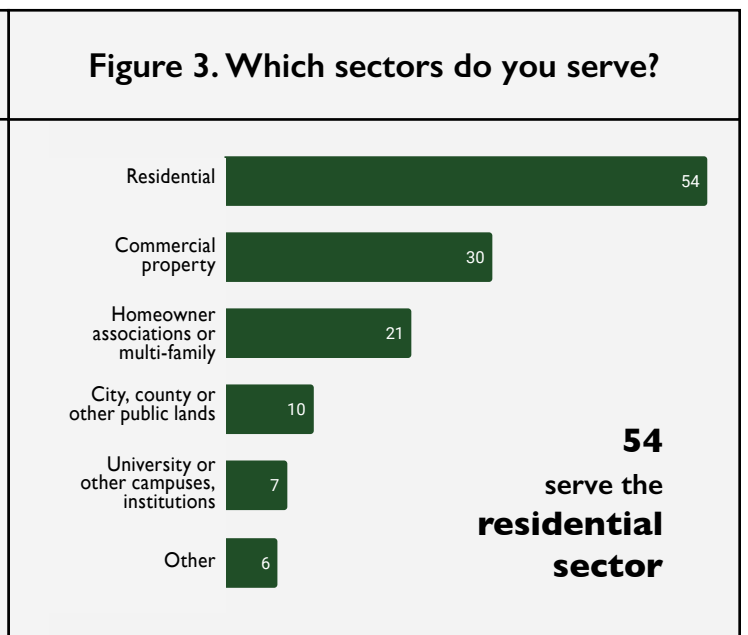


Figure 3. Which sectors do you serve?



Certifications & Licenses

Figure 4. Do you hold certifications with any of the following organizations?

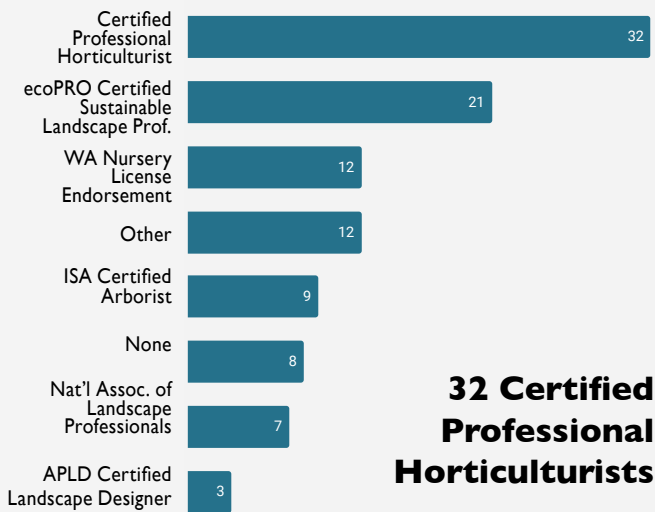
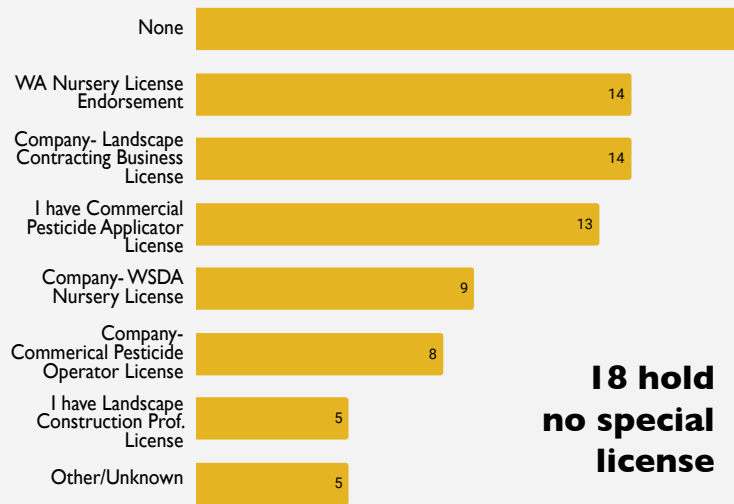


Figure 5. Do you or your business hold any of the following licenses with the State?



Customers

According to respondents, a majority of their jobs are completed pesticide-free (Figure 12). This aligns with the high percentage of customers that ask for pesticide-free or reduced-pesticide methods (Figure 6). There is still a small percentage of professionals who are rarely asked by customers to use pesticide-free methods, and

who seem to rely heavily on chemical pesticides for their work.

When asked about concerns over using pesticides, the majority of respondents point to all of the concerns (Figure 14). This aligns with what landscapers believe the concerns of their customers are as well (Figure 7).

Figure 6: How many of your customers ask for pesticide-free or reduced-pesticide pest management/site preparation?

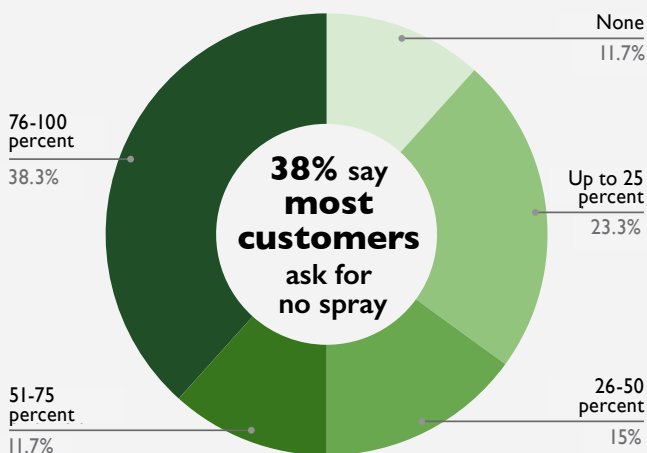
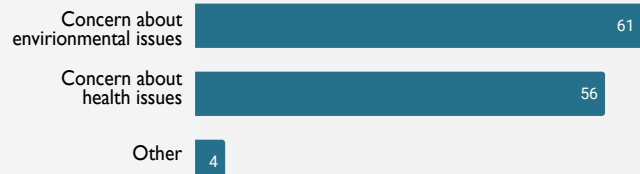


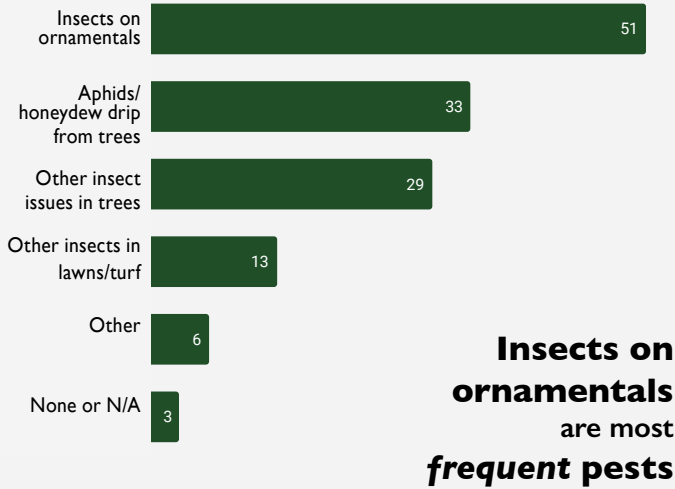
Figure 7: Why do you think customers ask for pesticide-free techniques?



Concern over both environmental and health issues

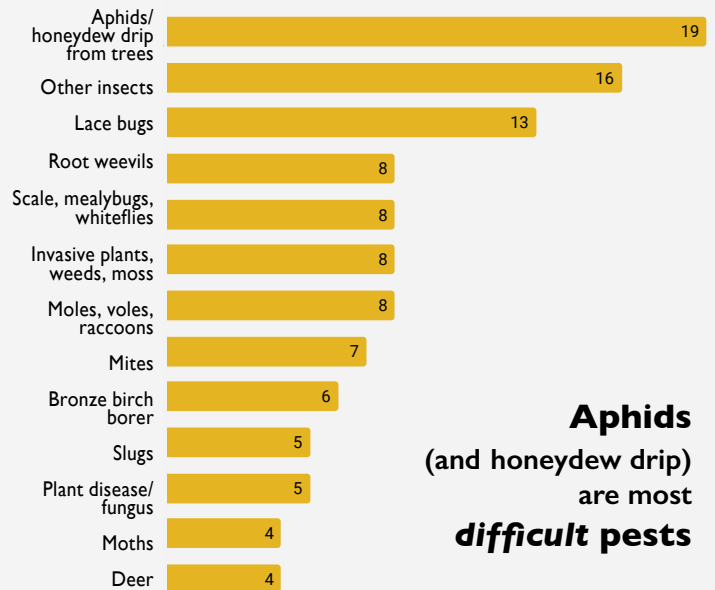
Top Pest & Disease Issues

Figure 8: What are the three most frequent insect pest issues that you deal with?



Azalea lace bug damage | Photo credit: James L. Castner

Figure 9: Which two pest issues do you face that are the most difficult to resolve?

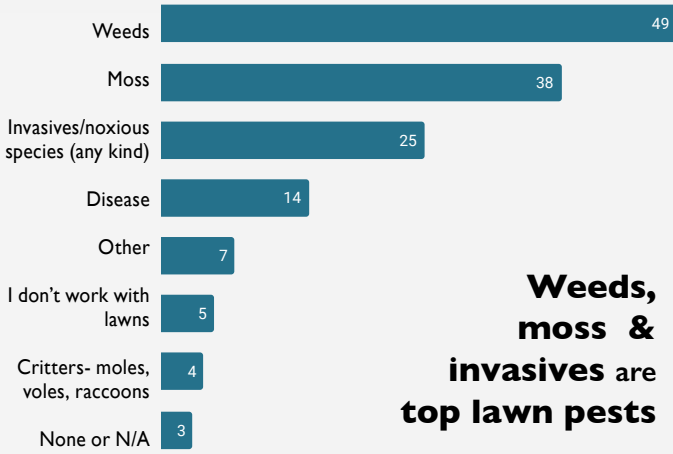


Aphids on oleander | Photo credit: Luke Jones

The results show that landscapers apply pesticides most often on ornamental beds, followed by trees, lawns/turf, and then hardscapes (Figure 13). This is consistent with the most frequent insect pest issues that they report dealing with: insects on ornamentals (Figure 8). Aphids and honeydew drip from trees are identified as the most difficult pest issues to resolve (Figure 9) and the second most frequent pest issue.

When asked about lawn/turf pest issues, weeds are the most frequent issue cited, followed by moss (Figure 10). Diseases on ornamentals rank as the most frequent disease/pathogen issue (Figure 11). Survey respondents identify powdery and downy mildew, phytophthora, Verticillium wilt, and root rot as some of the top pathogen and disease difficulties.

Figure 10: What are the most frequent lawn pest issues that you deal with?

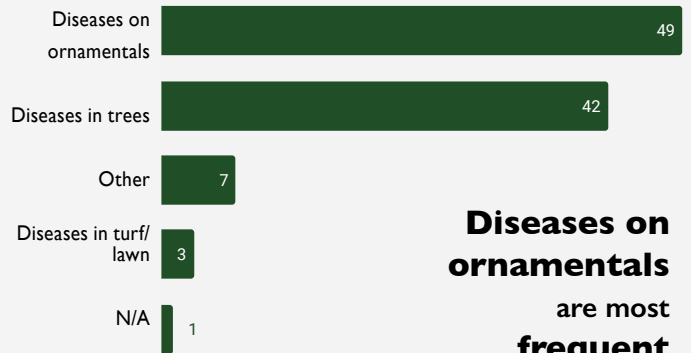


Weeds, moss & invasives are top lawn pests



Mossy lawn | Photo credit: Becky Striepe

Figure 11: What are the most frequent disease issues that you deal with?



Diseases on ornamentals are most frequent



Powdery mildew on rose | Photo credit: Scott Nelson



Downy mildew
Photo credit: Alexander Ching

Pesticide Use & Concerns

Figure 12: What percentage of your jobs are completed pesticide-free?

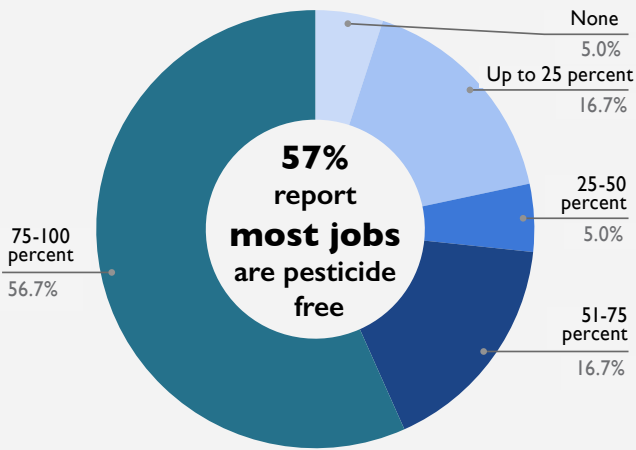


Figure 13: Which setting is most likely to receive pesticide applications from your organization?

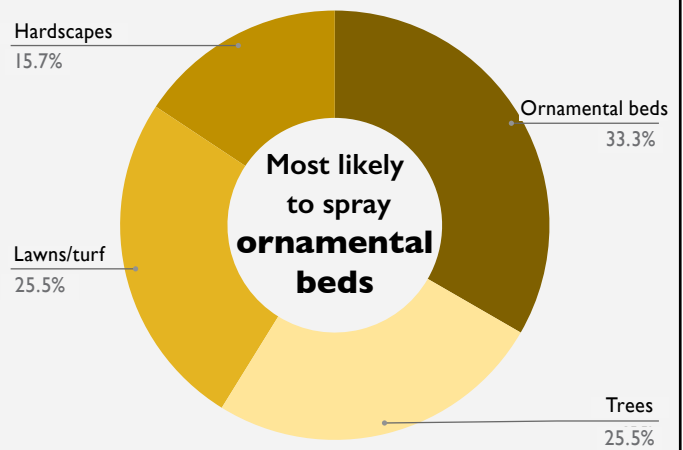
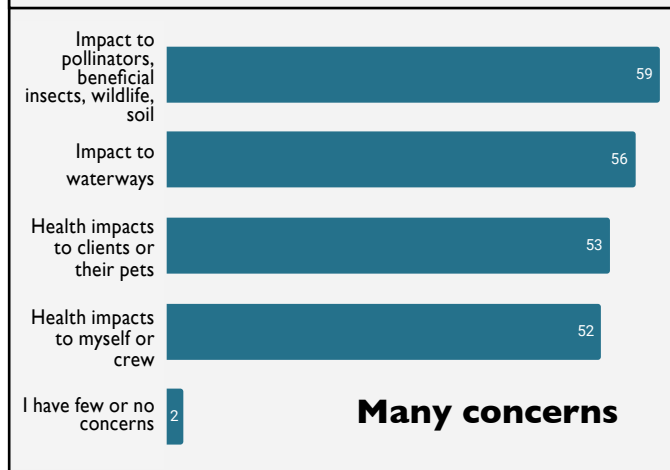


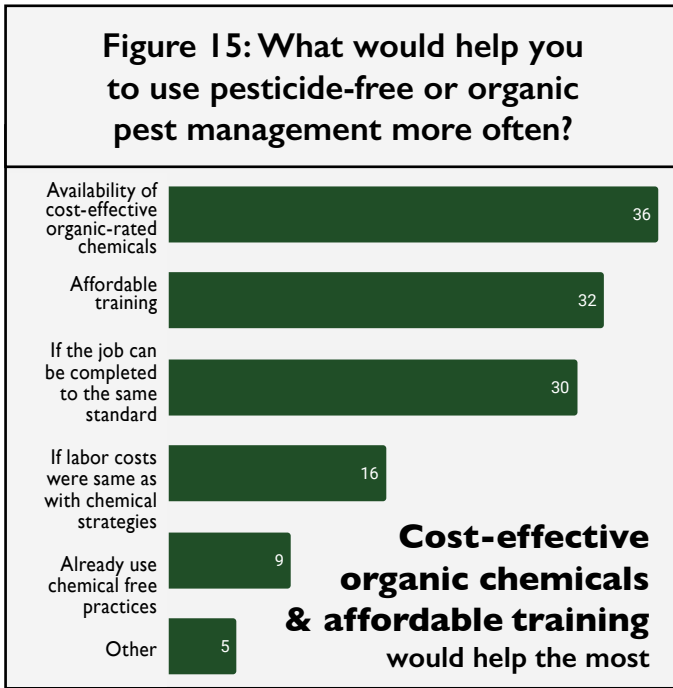
Photo: Franco Vannini

Figure 14: What concerns do you have about using pesticides in your work, if any?



Training & Other Needs

Figure 15: What would help you to use pesticide-free or organic pest management more often?



In order for landscapers to more frequently use pesticide-free methods, affordable training is high (second) on their list of needs (Figure 15). Landscaping professionals would like more training in effective chemical-free methods for dealing with pest issues, proper identification of weeds, insect and fungi, and managing the soil, among other topics (Figure 16).

The most preferred way to receive information is via in-person classes/workshops, followed by online webinars or other online materials (Figure 17).



Figure 16: What would you like more training in?

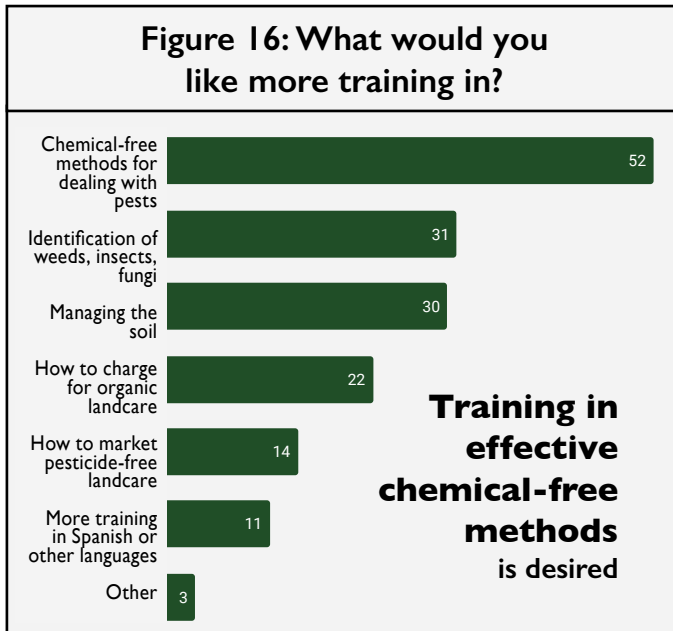
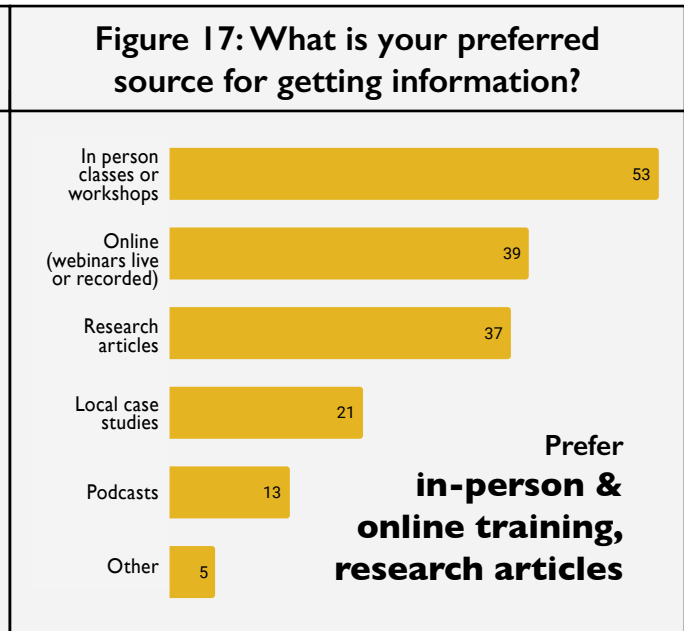


Figure 17: What is your preferred source for getting information?



Conclusion

The survey shows that the majority of respondents see a high demand for pesticide-free landscaping among customers, and likewise that the majority of these landscaping professionals complete most of their jobs without pesticides. We see this as very good news.

When pesticides are used they are often applied on ornamental beds, trees, lawns/turf, and hardscapes due to insects and disease and a lack of knowledge of how to manage difficult pest issues.

To meet the demand for pesticide-free landscaping, more affordable training for landscaping professionals needs to be offered. The most preferred way to get this information to respondents is through in-person workshops and online webinars.

We encourage others to use these results to determine training needs for the region and help improve resources for landscaping professionals.

NCAP is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting community and environmental health by inspiring ecologically sound alternatives to pesticides. NCAP works in partnership with the Washington State Nursery and Landscape Association (WSNLA) to promote and provide resources on certified sustainable landscaping to the local landscape professional and groundskeeper community.



Thank You

Thank you to the survey respondents for providing their insights and opinions to help improve awareness of common issues and education and training needs. Thank you to the King County WaterWorks grant program and other supporters for funding NCAP's research and education programs.

This report was created by Megan Dunn, Laura Keir and Ashley Chesser.
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