

# Places in Maine that control pesticide use

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Since 1970, 30 towns and cities in Maine – roughly 6 percent of the state’s 488 municipalities – have enacted local ordinances to control pesticide use. The ordinances vary in scope and intent from town to town and in some cases refer to pesticides, herbicides or both.

- **Allagash:** Population 239. Aroostook County. In 2004 Maine’s largest town (sizewise, it’s spread out over 135 square miles) enacted an ordinance banning the use of herbicides for forestry purposes. It was motivated by concerns over herbicides sprayed by the J.D. Irving company on its forest holdings in the area.

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- **Amherst:** Population 265. Hancock County. The town, which is bisected by the Union River, passed a land use ordinance in 1991 establishing resource protection districts and limiting chemical applications in shoreland areas only; applications in those areas require a permit from the planning board.

- **Arrowsic:** Population 501. Sagadahoc County. In 1984, the town voted to ban herbicide use by its public works department, but only as it was applied to leaves. Using herbicide on stumps is still allowed.

- **Brighton Plantation:** Population 70. Somerset County. The town voted to ban use of pesticides in woodlands within the town in 1996. The vote in this tiny town was 19-1 in favor of the ban.

- **Brunswick:** Population 20,278. Cumberland County. In 2005 Brunswick’s Town Council enacted an ordinance to prohibit use or storage of most pesticides within aquifer protection zones. The ordinance also prohibits aerial spraying other than for public health applications. Citing language from the Environmental Protection Agency that “all pesticides are toxic to some degree,” the council agreed that the purpose of the ordinance was to “safeguard the health and welfare” of residents and protect the town’s “good water and other natural resources.”

- **Castine:** Population 1,366. Hancock County. The town passed an ordinance in 2008 that included prohibition of pesticide storage within aquifer protection zones and requires permits for any non-residential use of pesticides.

- **Coplin Plantation:** Population 135. Franklin County. The town voted in 2001 to ban all aerial and mechanical spraying of pesticides. Twenty-six voters were present at the meeting; all voted in favor of the ban.

- **Cranberry Isles:** Population 141. Hancock County. In 1992 the island communities voted on a land use ordinance “to further the maintenance of safe and healthful conditions” and the protection of natural resources that included requiring permits for pesticide and herbicide use in forestry management with the exception of timber harvesting.

- **Harpwell:** Population 4,740. Cumberland County. This coastal community (216 miles of shoreline) established strict rules on the use of pesticides in 2004 and updated them in 2016. The motivation was to protect and maintain the health of “shellfish resources, marine environment, and pollinators.” The ordinance prohibits the use of “insect growth regulators,” or IGRs, which act on insect hormones to limit the insects’ life cycle, as well as insecticides that contain neonicotinoid. It explicitly exempts commercial agriculture, nurseries and golf courses.
- **Lebanon:** Population 6,031. York County. Lebanon voted to ban all aerial pesticide application at a town meeting in 1980. In 1983, Lebanon revisited the ban to limit it to non-agricultural use and to allow exemptions if approved at a town meeting.
- **Limerick:** Population 2,832. York County. At a town meeting in 1988, the town adopted an ordinance prohibiting herbicide application to rights-of-way. Town clerk Judy LePage said the issue was raised by a local mother who believed roadside spraying may have contributed to her daughter developing leukemia. The vote was 252-206 in favor of the ordinance.
- **Limestone:** Population 2,314. Aroostook County. This town banned aerial spraying of insecticides, pesticides and herbicides in 1970 “due to health hazard from air and water pollution.” Fungicides were allowed.
- **Manchester:** Population 2,580. Kennebec County. Manchester voted in June 2017 to prohibit the use of pesticides on all town-owned lands. The ordinance cites the intent to “safeguard the health and welfare of residents” and protect and conserve natural resources. It includes specific exemptions such as outdoor animal repellents, indoor use of rodent control and organic pesticides.
- **Montville:** Population 1,032. Waldo County. Montville passed an anti-spraying ordinance at its annual town meeting in 1980 without specifying pesticides, “based on the increasing evidence that the types of sprays most commonly used for bush control can cause cancer and birth defects in humans.”
- **Newburgh:** Population 1,551. Penobscot County. The town voted at its annual meeting in 1980 to prohibit use of herbicides along the roadside right of way.
- **New Gloucester:** Population 5,542. Cumberland County. In 1982 the town passed an ordinance that said the spraying or spreading of chemical fertilizers or pesticides had to be consistent with the standards of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
- **New Sweden:** Population 602. Aroostook County. The town voted in 1990 to ban aerial spraying of herbicides and pesticides within town limits.
- **Oqunquit:** Population 892. York County. The ordinance first passed in June 2014 but had to be voted on again at a special town meeting in November 2014 because the town failed to give proper notice to the state Board of Pesticide Control. It restricts the use or applications of synthetic pesticides on private property – the first Maine ordinance to do so – but allows for some uses, including on invasive species and on venomous or disease-carrying insects. It specifically exempts agriculture.

- **Owls Head:** Population 1,580. Knox County. At its March 1970 annual meeting, Owls Head voted “to outlaw the use of defoliant and stop all roadside spraying with poisons” in the town. The vote was the first of its kind in Maine (Limestone voted later in the same month on its pesticide ordinance).
- **Porter:** Population 1,498. Oxford County. The newest pesticide ordinance in Maine was enacted in March in response to a utility crew spraying roadsides without permission.
- **Portland:** Population 66,937. Cumberland County. Portland passed one of the strongest pesticide ordinances in the country in January 2018. Regulations restricting synthetic pesticides apply to city property as well as to private homeowners. It includes exemptions for Hadlock Field and Riverside Golf Course. Five city-owned playing fields will be exempt until 2021.
- **Rangeley:** Population 1,168. Franklin County. Rangeley’s pesticide ordinance limits mechanical application of pesticides on areas larger than two acres. It was submitted to the Board of Pesticide Control in 1989, but may predate that.
- **Rockland:** Population 7,179. Knox County. Rockland’s pesticide ordinance took effect in 2014. It restricts the application of pesticides and herbicides on town owned, leased or managed land, but organic pesticides are allowed.
- **South Portland:** Population 25,577. Cumberland County. South Portland developed its pesticide ordinance over the course of more than a year. When it passed in September 2016 it marked the first time a city of this size in Maine had enacted such an ordinance. It is one of the toughest ordinances, placing limits on private as well as municipal property. It allows the use of only pesticides allowed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and classified as “minimum risk” by the Environmental Protection Agency. Exemptions include commercial agriculture and golf courses.
- **Southport:** Population 606. Lincoln County. Southport was one of the first towns to restrict pesticides in Maine, voting in 1972 to “prohibit all state and commercial of pesticides and herbicides in the town of Southport.”
- **Standish:** Population 9,285. Cumberland County. Adopted in 2002, Standish’s ordinance limits the storage of pesticides and herbicides in shoreland areas “other than amounts normally associated with individual households or farms.”
- **Sweden:** Population 391. Oxford County. Sweden’s pesticide policy was last amended in 1991 and lays down restrictions on pesticides within the aquifer protection zone. Aerial spraying of herbicides and pesticides is entirely restricted within the zone, but agricultural and home use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicide use beyond that “use reasonably associated with home lawn and garden care” require a conditional-use permit.
- **Waterboro:** Population 7,693. York County. Waterboro calls its 1986 regulation a hazardous waste ordinance, and it covers much more than pesticides; in fact the word pesticide isn’t even used in the ordinance (“toxics” is, though). It’s really about storing toxics and intended to make sure anyone storing hazardous waste gets a town permit. It exempts agricultural and household waste, as well as gasoline stations.

- **Wayne:** Population 1,189. Kennebec County. Wayne restricts only the storage of pesticides and fertilizers (not the use) and only in shoreland zones. This ordinance includes an exemption for amounts “normally associated with individual households or farms.”
- **Wells:** Population 9,589. York County. In 1990 Wells voted to restrict pesticide use within a protected resource area around Branch Brook and the Branch Brook aquifer. Permission for pesticide use in those areas may be granted by a codes enforcement officer with at least 60 days’ notice.

— *MARY POLS*

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