

# Local landscape consultant focuses on tree health

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IPM began in the 1950s out of discontent over a purely insecticidal approach to insect control, which came to prominence with Rachel Carson's book "Silent Spring."

Baefsky formed his landscaping and consulting firm in Orinda after receiving a degree in Pest Management from UC Berkeley in 1985. He provides professional tree, pest and soil consulting to both public and private clients. Baefsky advises and consults with clients encouraging sustainable practices in the landscape that include re-using materials on sites as mulches, minimizing wasteful irrigation practices by monitoring soil moisture and watering as needed, eliminating pesticide use when alternatives exist, and using materials and methods that match specific sites.

He has held tree and IPM related advisory positions in the Bay Area and helped develop many IPM publications, most recently working with Dr. Chris Geiger of the San Francisco

Department of the Environment to coauthor "Pest Prevention by Design – Landscapes" which focuses on elements of design to prevent pest invasion.

Shortly after the California Healthy Schools Act (HSA) was passed in 2000, Baefsky traveled up and down the state working with districts on mandatory IPM training and providing information about pesticide use at public schools. He has also taught classes on Insects and IPM Pest Management at Merritt College, and on trees, pests, diseases and soil at Diablo Valley College.

"Teaching is my favorite tool," says Baefsky. He recalls an "Aha" moment when giving a workshop for the city of San Francisco a few years back: "There were about 120 participants at the Hall of Flowers who were used to more passive types of learning through PowerPoint presentations with the lights out. I gave them all a worksheet and turned it into a problem-solving treasure hunt with tables and exhibits filling the

rooms. Everyone got excited and involved."

Ever since, Baefsky discovers the joy of hands-on interactive workshops, going beyond the lecture format to present stimulating learning situations. He is a strong proponent of organic gardening, but not an absolute purist. "If an approach is environmentally sound, I'm willing to use it. I'm also a firm believer in following university research," he says.

COVID-19 has affected face-to-face contact for Baefsky, but he observes that people's increased involvement with their homes during the pandemic may have led to even more calls. His current protocol is to phone the client on arrival to their property, take a look at whatever the problem is, and then call back with his observations and suggestions, while often following up in writing.

People interested in Baefsky's work may contact him at [treesbugsdirt@gmail.com](mailto:treesbugsdirt@gmail.com), or call (925) 254-7950.



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