

Pesticides

Pesticides are chemicals used to kill or control household and garden pests such as weeds, insects and rodents. Most pesticides are designed to work on a wide number of pests. This also makes the pesticides harmful to useful insects, animals and plants.

Improper pesticide disposal can harm humans, pets, livestock and the environment. Throwing pesticides in the trash, on the ground or pouring them down the drain can pollute lakes, streams and drinking water.



When you consider using pesticides, first ask yourself these questions:

- Do I really need a pesticide to get the job done?
- What is the least toxic product that I can use?
- How much do I need to buy?

To avoid possible health and environmental problems, carefully follow the instructions on the household pesticide container and use only as much as the manufacturer recommends to get the job done. If you must use a pesticide, it's important that you use, store and dispose of it properly.

Using Pesticides Properly

Because of the hazardous nature of some pesticides, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) has cancelled, suspended, or otherwise restricted their use. To find out if any of the pesticides you currently have in your home are restricted, contact your county cooperative extension service office, the Ohio Department of Agriculture at (800) 282-1955 or www.agri.ohio.gov/pesticides/ or U.S. EPA, Office of Pesticide Programs at (800) 621-8431 or www.epa.gov/pesticides/.

Follow these safety tips when you buy or use pesticides:

- CAREFULLY read the label before buying or using any pesticide. Make sure you buy the proper pesticide to use on the "pests" you wish to control.
- Buy only as much as you need so there won't be any left over to store or dispose.

FACTS

Most pesticides are designed to work on a wide number of pests. This can make the pesticides harmful to useful insects, animals and plants as well. Throwing pesticides in the trash, on the ground or pouring them down the drain can pollute lakes, streams and drinking water.

- Follow all the safety instructions on the label and wear protective clothing.
- Wash your hands after handling or applying any pesticide. Make sure you use soap and water, because water alone may not be enough.
- Do not mix different pesticides unless instructed to do so in the directions.
- Avoid wearing contact lenses when you or anyone else is using pesticides. Contacts can absorb some pesticides or trap them against your eyes.
- Keep children and pets away from treated areas.
- Do not water a treated area right after applying pesticides unless the directions tell you to do so.
- If you use a pesticide indoors, air out the area completely after use. Clean all surface areas and tools that came in contact with the pesticide with water and detergent to remove any residues.
- Use the amount listed on the label. Too much may be an environmental or health risk and too little may not be effective.
- Use the pesticide for its intended purpose.

Storing Pesticides Safely

- Keep pesticides in their original containers. If the original container is damaged, place the container inside a larger container sealed with a plastic lid (zip-lock baggie works well), a box lined with two plastic bags, or a metal container with a lid.
- Clearly label the outside of the container with the name and quantity of the pesticide and the date. Always try to keep the original label if possible.

Pesticides

- Store pesticides in a dry, locked cabinet or on a high shelf away from children and pets.
- Keep pesticide containers from getting wet or frozen.

Proper Pesticide Disposal

- Use all of a pesticide before buying more.
- If you can't use all of a pesticide yourself, find someone who can. Contact neighbors, friends, greenhouses, plant nurseries, park departments and garden clubs. Make sure any pesticides you give away are in their original containers with readable instructions.
- Empty pesticide containers should be rinsed at least three times. Use the rinse water as you would the regular strength pesticide. You can put the rinsed container in the trash.
- Pesticides that cannot be used should be taken to a community household hazardous waste collection event. Call your local solid waste management district for information (located in the blue pages under County Government in your phone directory). Or, visit Ohio EPA's website at www.epa.ohio.gov/dsiwm/pages/recycpro.aspx for a list of local contacts.

Alternatives to Chemical Pesticides

Sometimes you may need to buy pesticides, but first try to use an alternate method. The general steps listed below show how you often don't need pesticides when you identify and monitor pests, when you plan ahead and take preventative steps, and when you use nonchemical controls. For detailed information, call your local extension agent.

- Identify pests carefully. Many "pests" may turn out to be harmless or actually useful. Learn all you can about the pests you do have.
- Encourage useful insects in the garden by planting small flowered plants, providing food for those insects, and reducing the use of pesticides.
- Buy useful insects to release in your garden.
- Tolerate small numbers of pests.
- Remove the things that make pests feel at home, such as moisture in the basement or food left out. Use physical barriers to keep pests out of the area. Use traps to capture

IMPORTANT

Pesticides should **NEVER** be burned, buried, mixed together, poured on the ground, dumped in water, or poured down the drain. This could lead to pollution of drinking water, lakes and streams, or dangerous exposure to pesticides for humans, animals or plants.

pests without chemicals or remove pests manually, such as with clippers or water spray.

- Encourage ecological variety by planting a wide variety of plants and grow plants that are resistant to insects and diseases in your area (ask your local nursery for tips).
- Rotate annual plantings of flowers and vegetables so that insect populations do not build up in an area.
- Keep weeds down by mulching and hand pulling.
- If you choose to use a chemical, use the least toxic one possible, and always make spot rather than general applications.
- Check an organic gardening book, an environmental store, or a health food store for more ideas on alternate uses for pesticides.

For More Information

Your county's cooperative extension office or solid waste management district will have more information (both listed under County Government in the blue section of your phone directory). Solid waste management district contacts are also at www.epa.ohio.gov/dsiwm/pages/recycpro.aspx.

Ohio Department of Agriculture, Pesticide and Fertilizer Regulation Section
www.agri.ohio.gov/pesticides/

Ohio State University Extension Office, Proper Pesticide Use
<http://extension.osu.edu/topics/garden/proper-pesticide-use-ipm>

U.S. EPA website

Controlling Pests Around the Home
www.epa.gov/pesticides/controlling/index.htm

Earth 911 website

For more information about recycling options for your household hazardous wastes.
www.earth911.com

This information was based on the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's household hazardous waste Fact sheets and the Missouri Household Hazardous Waste Project "Guide to Hazardous Products Around the Home."