

## USE PESTICIDES SAFELY DURING SUMMER GROWING SEASON

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office*



PHOTO BY J.N. Hall

Herbicides or "weed killers" in liquid form must never be applied when windy conditions exist as the spray can drift onto other plants in your landscape or your neighbors' landscape. Shown above is a young leaf on a grape vine exhibiting characteristic small, narrow, misshapen symptoms from herbicide damage from spray drift.

Summer officially arrived a few days ago. With the warm and humid climate found in our growing area, a wide range of weeds, insect pests and diseases can become a problem.

Healthy, attractive landscapes without damaging insects and diseases or completing weeds are the primary goal for home gardeners and landscape managers. When plant problems do occur, pesticides can be important gardening tools but must be chosen and used with appro-

priate care and planning. Responsible management practices compel you to consider your landscape as part of the larger community ecosystem. There are a variety of ways to manage insects, weeds, diseases, and other problems. The least toxic solutions (physical, mechanical, biological controls) should always be tried first.

Consider all available options for managing pests and if pesticides are needed, use extreme cau-

tion when using them. The impact of your gardening and pest management decisions often extends far beyond your property line

Pesticides are a large, diverse group of chemicals that include insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, insect repellents, animal repellents, mice control products, etc. All of these are chemicals that will kill or inhibit some type of pest, whether it's an insect, weed, disease, or animal.



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To protect yourself, your family and the environment, read the label — it's not only the law, it's for your personal safety also! The danger of any product is evaluated not only by its toxicity, but also by the degree of your exposure to the product. As Paracelsus, the "father" of modern toxicology, put it, "The dose makes the poison."

Pesticide product labels are legal documents. It is illegal to use pesticides in a manner not specified on the product label. You must not only read the pesticide label before mixing, applying, and storing a pesticide, you should read the label before purchasing the pesticide.

Labels specify what the pesticide may be used on, how to mix and apply it, and how to store the container. Always make sure all of your intended uses are in compliance with directions printed on the label.

For example, even if you are trying to control the same insect pest such as aphids, don't assume that a given insecticide you use on vegetables and fruits can also be used on trees or lawns. Follow the rate given on the label for the type of plant the insecticide is being applied on. Never exceed the rate on the pesticide label!

Do you know how many days you must wait after spraying a vegetable before you can harvest the crop? For example, for a specific insecticide, the "days-to-harvest" period can be 1 day for a particular vegetable and 14 days for another type vegetable.

Do you know how long to wait before making a follow-up application? Do you know if the material is toxic to bees or fish? Check the label for this important information

to avoid potential problems.

It is also very important to avoid application or movement of a pesticide onto non-target areas. For example, use precautions to keep pesticides away from ponds, streams, bayous and other waterways. When applying "weed & feed" fertilizers and other types of granular pesticides to lawn and landscape areas, take care to avoid placement on non-target areas such as driveways, sidewalks, etc.

Finally, be sure to protect yourself from exposure while mixing or applying pesticides. Wear unlined chemical resistant rubber or neoprene gloves. Cover exposed skin. Wash thoroughly when you're done and store both the pesticides and application equipment properly.

#### **DID YOU KNOW? - Quick Facts & Hints about Pesticide Usage**

- Pesticides are a large, diverse group of chemicals that include insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, insect repellents, animal repellents, mice control products, etc.

- While deaths from occupational exposure to pesticides are unusual, children under 10 years old represent 50% of the accidental deaths by pesticides! Moreover, the majority of pesticide deaths are caused by eating or drinking the product!

- About 90% of the long-term exposure that a pesticide user receives is dermal (in other words, through the skin)! Thoughtfulness and use of appropriate clothing will reduce pesticide exposure.

- Soft contact lenses should not be worn when working with pesticides.

Soft contact lenses may absorb pesticide vapors from the air and hold them against your eyes.

- It is dangerous — and illegal — to spray when windy conditions exist as the spray could drift onto you or your neighbors. Spray drift from applying herbicides under windy conditions is a common cause for damage on other non-target plants in the home landscape as well as plants your neighbors' landscapes.

- The target area to be treated as well as the surrounding area should be examined before applying any pesticide. Are there plants or animals that could be harmed by the pesticide? Don't spray if you cannot guarantee they will not be injured. You are responsible for any damage that could occur.

- The date of purchase should be clearly marked with a permanent marker on containers that are put into storage. Use the oldest products first.

