

Use common sense with pesticides

By F. L. McEwen
Environmental Biologist

Home gardeners can protect plants against pests using the many types of pesticides available. Today we have many pesticides, each one packaged in a variety of ways. For the home gardener, these are formulated in several ways. These include liquids to be diluted with water and sprayed onto the foliage of plants to protect them from insects and diseases, or applied to the soil for control of pests in the soil.

The homeowner can also purchase dust formulations in shaker cans, ready-to-apply or in packages to be emptied into your own duster for application. Granular formulations are also available, sometimes mixed with fertilizer, for control of soil and lawn insects, diseases and weeds.

On each package will be found a label that specifies how the product should be used and what pests it will control. This label is important. It is your guide to successful use of the product. Follow the instructions carefully and use the product only as the label directs.

Insecticides are products to kill the insects. Carbaryl (Sevin), methoxychlor, pyrethrum and rotenone are good to control most beetles and leaf-eating caterpillars, while malathion is good to control aphids and some other insects.

Insecticides should be used only if a lot of insects are feeding on your plants. Don't bother with the sprayer for a few bugs. If only a few are present on a few plants, it is much easier to pick them off by hand or shake them from the plant and destroy them.

Fungicides are products to prevent diseases in plants. Maneb, mancozeb, captan and ferbam are some of those used commonly by the home gardener for general disease control, and sulfur is especially good for mildew on plants.

When using fungicides, be guided by past experience. If you have been having disease problems in the garden, treat those plants where the problem has occurred. Follar diseases on roses are usually present and will make them unattractive and not productive. With many flowers and garden crops, however, fungicides are not necessary.

Herbicides are used to control weeds; 2,4-D, mecoprop and dicamba are a few of those available for control of broad-leaved weeds, while others are needed to control crabgrass. Herbicides properly used will play a major role in keeping your lawn neat and attractive.

Herbicides are intended to kill plants and one must be very careful not to accidentally apply these when they will damage sensitive crops. Always use a different sprayer for applying herbicides from the one used for insecticides and fungicides. Label your herbicide sprayer to make sure it is used only for weed spraying.

In Ontario, highly toxic pesticides can be purchased only by agriculturalists and licensed pesticide applicators. Those available to the home gardener are quite safe and will not injure children or pets, provided common sense is used.



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