



PESTICIDE

USE AND DISPOSAL

Pesticides can cause problems for our health and the environment even when applied according to label directions. Pesticides sprayed outdoors to kill insect pests or control weeds make their way into our waterways. Very small amounts of pesticides can be lethal to marine life, birds, and other life forms.

This is why water pollution prevention agencies in charge of our municipal storm drain systems and wastewater treatment plants support “integrated pest management” (IPM), a strategy that aims to prevent pests and their damage long-term, using a combination of least-toxic techniques. Pest control materials are applied in a manner that minimizes risk to human health, beneficial and non-target organisms, and the environment.

IF YOU MUST USE PESTICIDES

Choose wisely

- Identify the pest and the afflicted plant, and then choose a product labeled for use on that pest and plant. Not all pesticides are effective against all pests.
- Choose the least-toxic product available. Enclosed baits and traps are safer options.
- Buy ready-to-use products instead of concentrates. In addition to being less toxic because they are diluted, ready-to-use products avoid spills because you don't need to measure or mix the product.
- Avoid sprays. Aerosol sprays in particular increase the risk of exposure to beneficial insects, birds, pets, you, and your family.

Use wisely

- Use only the amount recommended on the label to do the job. More is not better.
- Spot-treat whenever possible.
- Don't use pesticides outdoors when rain is predicted, or just before you water your lawn or garden.
- Pesticides, whether tracked in from outdoors or used inside, can contaminate carpets and floors where

When you choose pest control products, choose types that are less risky for people, pets, and the environment.

- Traps are non-toxic.
- Enclosed baits offer the lowest exposure to pesticides.
- Horticultural oils and insecticidal soaps are examples of less-toxic pesticides, although both will kill pollinators and natural enemies on contact.

For more information on choosing the least-toxic pest control products available, go to: www.ourwaterourworld.org.

children play. If you apply pesticides outside, you can carry chemicals inside on your clothing and shoes. Pets can also be carriers.

STORING PESTICIDES AND APPLICATION EQUIPMENT

- Store pesticides in their original containers, and keep the label on the product. Follow all storage instructions on the label. If the label gets wet or starts to come off, protect it with plastic tape. Never transfer pesticides to soft drink bottles or other containers.
- Store pesticides where children and pets cannot reach them. Close containers tightly, and remember that “child-resistant” packaging does not mean “child-proof.”
- Do not store pesticides where flooding is possible or in places where they might spill or leak onto the ground or into water. Clearly mark containers, applicators and utensils used for mixing or applying pesticides and store them with the pesticides. Do not use them for any other purpose.



SAFE AND LEGAL PESTICIDE DISPOSAL

- Take pesticides you won't be using to a local household hazardous waste collection facility or event. For a list of county household hazardous waste programs, visit www.calrecycle.ca.gov/HomeHazWaste/Directory/. In California, it's illegal to dispose of any amount of unused pesticide (or any hazardous waste) in the trash, in spite of what the label may say.
- You may dispose of empty pesticide containers in the trash if they are 5 gallons or less in capacity. When you have used up the pesticide, rinse the container

three times, each time pouring the rinsewater on the plant you bought the pesticide for. Then put the rinsed container in the trash.

- Never dispose of pesticide rinse water in any indoor or outdoor drain. Water used to rinse out a sprayer or applicator should be applied like the pesticide.
- If you have a pesticide that is no longer available in stores—such as chlordane, DDT, chlorpyrifos (Dursban), or diazinon, do not use it. Take it to household hazardous waste collection.

READ THE LABEL

Labels can be confusing to read, but you can find important information that will help you make less toxic choices.

- **Look for *signal words*.** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency requires the manufacturer to print them in plain sight:

DANGER = high toxicity

WARNING = moderately toxic

CAUTION = low toxicity

- **Check the *active ingredients*.** For a list of less toxic active ingredients, go to www.OurWaterOurWorld.org.
- **If the label instructs you to use protective gear like gloves or goggles, do it!** Your health could depend on following this advice.
- For answers to questions about the safety, proper use, or environmental impact of a pesticide, call the **National Pesticide Information Center 24-hour hotline at (800) 858-PEST (1-800-858-7378)** or visit www.npic.orst.edu.



Image: Penn State Extension, Pesticide Education Program



WWW.OURWATEROURWORLD.ORG

Common home and garden pesticides are found in stormwater runoff, treated wastewater, and in local waterways, sometimes at levels that can harm sensitive aquatic life. **Our Water Our World** is a joint effort by water pollution prevention agencies, participating retail stores, and pesticide distributors and manufacturers—working together to reduce the risks associated with pesticide use.

Our Water Our World fact sheets and store displays educate residents about less-toxic pest management. For the rest of the series of fact sheets, visit www.OurWaterOurWorld.org. Look for the **Eco-friendly** tag next to less-toxic products in participating stores and nurseries. See the *Pesticides and Water Quality* fact sheet for information on active ingredients in common pesticides that may cause water quality problems.

Pest control strategies and methods described in this publication are consistent with integrated pest management (IPM) concepts, and are based on scientific studies and tests in actual home and garden settings. Use suggested products according to label directions and dispose of unwanted or leftover pesticides at a household hazardous waste collection facility or event. For more information on pesticide disposal, visit www.earth911.com. No endorsement of specific brand name products is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products that are not mentioned.

For more information, contact:

Bio-Integral Resource Center (BIRC), 510.524.2567, www.birc.org
University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners in your area
University of California IPM website, www.ipm.ucanr.edu