



TREE CARE INDUSTRY Association

established 1938

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For immediate release

Summer Means Pesticide Safety Time

Many homeowners are entering a dangerous period as they begin to care for their lawns and landscapes. Proper handling of pesticides is a vital concern for personal and environmental safety. Below are common sense precautions for homeowners, but sometimes people do things without thinking. The best choice of all may be to consult a professional who can diagnose pest problems and recommend chemical or non-chemical alternatives.

A survey of homeowners by the Virginia Cooperative Extension found some alarming gaps in knowledge and safe practices of do-it-yourselfers. A beautiful lawn, shrub or tree isn't worth the trade-off if pesticides are not being used properly.

According to the survey:

- ◆ 60 percent of homeowners reported they don't wear any protective clothing or equipment when applying pesticides
- ◆ more than 40 percent don't remove toys, pet dishes, and lawn furniture before applying pesticides
- ◆ just 45 percent follow label directions about when it is safe to re-enter an area sprayed with pesticides
- ◆ fewer than 5 percent bothered to warn their neighbors when they were applying pesticides.

Many people don't have to use pesticides at all. Professionals may be able to solve landscape problems without pesticides, by choosing non-chemical alternatives, such as sanitation procedures and selecting shrubs and ornamental trees that are less susceptible to diseases and insects. For example, an infestation last year may only require all the old plant material to be cut out. Often, cultural practices (pruning, raking leaves, etc.) will go a long way toward solving pest problems.

If a homeowner decides to use pesticides, follow these suggestions:

- ◆ Identify the pest first. There is no use in applying a pesticide that won't address your pest problem.
- ◆ Buy ready-to-use pesticides. They're more expensive, but are less toxic than concentrates and eliminate the chance of exposure during mixing. In addition, they can be purchased in the smaller quantities that homeowners realistically need.
- ◆ Buy no more material than you can use in one season. Buying more creates storage problems and potentially expensive disposal problems.
- ◆ Don't be tempted to use agricultural chemicals. They aren't designed for use by homeowners. A small miscalculation in the mixing of a small batch could result in drastic overdosing.
- ◆ Buy the least toxic chemical. Most chemicals available to homeowners use the signal words "caution," "warning," or "danger" on their labels. Try to avoid those with the "warning" and "danger" labels, as they are more hazardous.
- ◆ Never mix herbicides with other kinds of pesticides, and never use the same equipment to spray herbicides and other pesticides. You could unintentionally kill the plants you are trying to protect.
- ◆ Always follow label instructions on mixing, application, storage, and disposal of pesticides.
- ◆ Don't mix or store pesticides in food containers, and don't measure pesticides with the measuring cups and spoons you use in the kitchen. Always store pesticides in the original container with the label intact.

For treatment of trees and shrubs, contact the Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA), a 66-year-old public and professional resource on trees and arboriculture. It has more than 2,200 members who recognize stringent safety and performance standards, and are required to carry liability insurance. An easy way to find a tree care service provider in your area is to use their "Locate Your Local TCIA Member Companies" program. You can use this service by calling 1-800-733-2622 or by doing a zip code search on their Web site, www.treecareindustry.org