

## Pesticides – Kill the Pest & Protect the Rest

What is a Pesticide? A pesticide is a product designed to kill offending organisms; such products include insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, bactericides, and rodenticides. It is important to note that some pesticides are derived from organic materials while others are made from inorganic (synthetic) materials.

For decades, people have debated whether it is safe to use pesticides in the landscape. My advice is always to apply pesticides based on label recommendations to protect people, pets, and the environment. In Central Florida, we are fortunate to have favorable weather all year around which allows us to work outdoors 12 months of the year. As people work outdoors, the use of pesticides become more common which increases the likelihood of incorrect usage.

Pesticides should only be used based on label recommendations; ‘the label is the law.’ My recommendation is that you read the label at least three times; at the store before you purchase, before you mix the pesticides, and before you apply the pesticides. Wear personal protective equipment (PPE). It is a common mistake for pesticide applicators to become friendly with pesticides after repeated use. Friendly in the sense that they do not wear personal protective equipment such as the proper gloves, eye wear, respirators, and head gear. I frequently see people applying pesticides in flip flops. Such a habit is dangerous; pesticides will affect you negatively if gets in contact with the eye, mouth, nostril, or skin. The effect may not be immediate, but it all adds up to a negative health condition in later years. I am not here trying to scare you, just saying protect yourself. If you are unable to fully understand the label, feel free to contact your local UF/IFAS Extension where they will help you to understand the label. You can also contact the pesticide manufacture for further explanation.

When using pesticides, be mindful of your environment. Do not apply pesticides to flowering plants because it can accidentally kill pollinators such as bees and butterflies. Also, check the weather before making any pesticide application. If rain is expected within the next 24 hours, postpone application until there is a dry forecast. Should it rain during or soon after an application, pesticides will be washed into our water bodies and cause pollution. In addition, don’t apply pesticides close to a pond or lake. Leave a zone of protection of at least 10 feet from the water body. Water pollution affects aquatic plants and animals.

Smoking, eating and drinking while handling pesticides are all unsafe habits. After using pesticides, wash your hands thoroughly and wash your hands before using the restroom. At the end of the work day, ensure to wash your pesticides clothes separately and clean the washer at the end of the cycle.

For more information on pesticide usage and safety, contact Grantly Ricketts at UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola at 321-697-3000 or email [gricketts@ufl.edu](mailto:gricketts@ufl.edu).