

PESTICIDE STORAGE TIPS

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As we move into winter, store lawn and garden pesticides correctly and securely. Storage information can be found on the label. Read and follow it for safety and to help keep pesticides from degrading.

Incorrect storage of pesticide can lead to accidental poisoning. A common mistake is pouring a pesticide into a container other than the original. This is against pesticide label laws and has led to poisoning.

Here are two examples that have occurred in the United States. In one incidence, a father placed a small amount of insecticide in a cup and set it outside, hoping to kill spiders. His 21 month old daughter found the cup and drank it.

In another incident, a gardener poured extra pesticide into a juice bottle. His wife found the bottle in his truck and took it into the house. She later drank some of it, thinking it was juice.

These are true incidents and fortunately, in both cases, the child and wife recovered after medical treatment. However, these cases emphasize the importance of storing pesticides in their original containers only; and in a secure location that can be locked.

A common question about winter storage is if a pesticide is still effective after freezing. Safety first; if a pesticide does freeze and expand, remember that a glass bottle or plastic container may crack and leak.

As for effectiveness; first check the product label for storage recommendations and any warnings against freezing. Most liquid pesticides are safely stored between 40 and 100 degrees Fahrenheit. If a liquid pesticide does freeze, it may be less effective in controlling pests.

Pesticides contain active and inactive ingredients. The active ingredient is what kills the pest. Inactive ingredients include solvents, carriers, or emulsifiers that make the pesticide more efficient.

Due to inclusion of some inactive ingredients, the freezing point of some liquid pesticides is lower than 32 degrees F., according to a University of Missouri Extension publication on pesticide storage. It is important to read the label for temperature storage requirements.

When a liquid pesticide freezes, the active ingredients can separate from the solvents or emulsifiers, causing the emulsifiers to become inactive, crystalize, and coagulate, breaking down the original product.

If frozen, some pesticides can be thawed naturally at room temperature, but never use a flame or heat. Make sure the container has not cracked. After thawing, roll and shake the container to resuspend the contents.

If crystals are still present after thawing, the pesticide should not be used as it will be ineffective. It should be properly disposed of according to label directions.

Generally, pesticides that are wettable powders or granules are not affected by low temperatures. Moisture, though, can cause caking that may reduce effectiveness. Products formulated in water-soluble packets should not be allowed to freeze as they will become brittle and break open.

When storing pesticides, do not store them near heat, sparks, or open flames. Keep containers tightly closed in a cool, locked, well-ventilated place away from children, pets and food items. And always store pesticides in their original containers.