

Read Pesticide Labels

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Sevin is a common insecticide used in home gardens; however, the Sevin you purchase this year might not be the same as Sevin purchased in the past. This is important to know because it reminds us of the need to always read pesticide labels for safe and responsible use; even of pesticides you've used before.

Sevin is a brand name not a chemical name. Sevin typically contained the active ingredient carbaryl. Recently, the active ingredient in some Sevin products was changed from carbaryl to zeta-cypermethrin. This is a pyrethroid that is less toxic to mammals but still highly toxic to bees and aquatic species.

Since the brand name of Sevin is the same, unless the label is read prior to use, users may end up using the product incorrectly or not waiting the correct numbers of days between reapplication or harvesting of edible crops.

An important difference between carbaryl Sevin and zeta-cypermethrin Sevin is the waiting period between application and when fruits and vegetables can be harvested. This is called preharvest interval or PHI. When applying products on edible crops, check the label for the PHI.

For example, for apples and peaches, the PHI for the new Sevin is 14 days compared to 3 days for carbaryl Sevin. This is quite a difference. Always read pesticide labels before use, even if using familiar products. On some edible crops, the waiting period with the new Sevin is less while on others it is longer.

Roundup is another commonly used pesticide that is a brand name where different Roundup products contain different active ingredients. On labels, the active ingredient is listed on the front of the label near the bottom. It says active ingredient and then lists the chemical or chemicals found in the product.

Roundup is known for containing the active ingredient glyphosate. There are a number of Roundup products, many that contain glyphosate but others that have additional active ingredients along with glyphosate or which have no glyphosate at all.

The only way to know how to use pesticide products correctly and safely is to check what the active ingredient is and read the label prior to purchasing and using.

Pesticide labels are the law. Before purchasing, know where you plan to apply the product. The site, such as a vegetable garden, lawn, flower garden or tree must be listed on the label as a site the product can be applied to. It is illegal to apply a pesticide to a site not listed on the label and increases the risk of injury to desirable plants or the environment.

Along with preharvest intervals, directions for use and other precautions are key label directions to read. Directions for use not only tell how to mix the product, but what personal protective equipment such as chemical resistant gloves, need to be worn to protect the applicator.

The label lists what pests are controlled by the product. If the pest you are dealing with is not on the label, it may be a waste of money to apply the product and an irresponsible pesticide use. If you don't know what pest you have, pesticide products should not be purchased until the issue is positively identified.

Pesticide labels will also list restrictions for the product. For example, a product might be labeled for most shade and ornamental trees but not all. Labels will state which plants not to apply the product to.

If pesticides are chosen as a management method for pests (insects, weeds, disease), read the label prior to purchase and use.