

# Properly Disposing of Unused Pesticides

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With the summer growing season starting to wind down you notice that you have left over pesticide from this year's battle with our local gardening pests. Or, maybe you finally decide to clean out your messy storage shed. While moving things around, you discover a bottle of pesticide left over when you sprayed that rose bush which died two years ago. Now, how do you get rid of the chemical safely and legally?

There are right ways and wrong ways of disposing unwanted pesticide. In South Carolina it is illegal to pour a pesticide in the sink or toilet, on the street, in the gutter or sewer, in running or standing water or even on the ground. It is also illegal to burn unwanted pesticide containers even if they are empty. Irresponsible actions when disposing of pesticide can cause serious environmental problems. Actions which introduce a pesticide concentrate into the air or into contact with unprotected soil or water has the potential to cause a hazard to people and animals. Also, check the label for disposal instructions and follow those as well. Homeowners should follow the same guidelines taught to farmers and commercial applicators when applying and disposing of pesticides.

Before purchasing any pesticide, make sure you have positively identified the pest you want to control. Don't guess. If you need help, contact your local county Extension office for assistance. They may even be able to give you a nonchemical control measure. If a pesticide is the only solution, make certain you select one that is labeled for the pest to be controlled and for the plant you are spraying it on. Choose the one that is least toxic. Buy only the amount you need. Don't stockpile pesticides. Many pesticides have a short storage life once open. Mix and apply the pesticide according to the label directions. Pesticide labels are a wealth of information. Some of the information provided includes the active ingredient, chemical use, application techniques, toxicity to the user and the environment, storage and disposal instruction, re-entry times and precautionary information. All pesticides should be stored in the original container with the original label attached and protected from damage locked, secure area. If the pesticide and the label get separated, the information on how to use the product or, even worse, what is in the container is lost. This causes the problem of having a pesticide that you cannot identify or know how to dispose of.

The best way to dispose of any pesticide is to mix and apply it on the site and in the manner in which the product label recommends. If you use all the product, allow the container to drain into the sprayer for at least one minute, then triple rinse the container. Triple rinsing pesticide containers will remove 99% of the product. Once triple rinsed, the container can be safely disposed of in the household garbage or at a recycling center. If there is a small quantity of pesticide left in the original container and it is not feasible to apply it according to label direction then do the following: 1) make sure the cap is well sealed, 2) wrap the container in several layers of old newspaper and place the wrapped container into a plastic bag which can be sealed, 3) place the sealed bag into the household garbage. If you have a gallon or more of unwanted pesticide, contact the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control.