

Frequently asked questions

Q: Why shouldn't I apply pesticides on windy or hot days?

When applying pesticides, it is important to prevent the pesticide from drifting to areas not intended to be treated. On windy days, the likelihood of pesticide drift is increased. You can reduce drift by using nozzles with larger openings, spraying in the early morning or evening when the air is likely to be calm, and keeping the nozzle close to the surface being treated.

As the air temperature rises, chemicals in some pesticides vaporize. The vapors may be carried by moving air and settle onto areas where you don't want the pesticide. By making pesticide applications only when the temperature is less than the maximum specified on the label, you will greatly reduce your chance of harming nontarget plants and animals.

Q: Can I use the same pesticide recommended to control ants in my garden to control ants in my kitchen?

You may only apply a pesticide to those sites (e.g., garden, house, pet) that are listed on the product label. If the label does not state that the pesticide may be used to control ants indoors, it is illegal and unsafe to do so.

However, if you have a product that will control ants in your garden and you want to use it to control another garden insect, you may do so, provided that the label doesn't prohibit such use. Before doing this, check with your county Cooperative Extension office to be sure it will be effective.

Home PEST seeks to provide homeowners with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions about pesticides.

This publication is available from your county Cooperative Extension office.

The Home PEST project was developed by the University of Wisconsin-Extension Pesticide Applicator Training (PAT) program.

Any reference to pesticide products are for your convenience and are not an endorsement or criticism of one product over other similar products.

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#7 - Applying Pesticides

Proper pesticide application



Home PEST

Home Pesticide Education & Safety Training
University of Wisconsin-Extension

Before You Apply a Pesticide

Along with your right to apply pesticides comes your responsibility to prevent damage or injury to yourself, others, nontarget plants and animals, property, and the environment. There are several things you need to do before you even open the pesticide container.

Check the weather

- Do not spray if the wind is strong enough to keep leaves in constant motion.
- Do not spray if rain is expected within the time period specified on the label (e.g. 24 hours).
- Do not spray when the temperature exceeds that which is specified on the label (e.g. 80°F).
- Spray in the early morning or evening (wind is usually more calm) to prevent the pesticide from drifting into unwanted areas and causing damage.

Read the Label

- The label contains all of the information you will need to properly handle a pesticide. For more information on what you will find on a pesticide label, refer to Home PEST brochure #5, "Reading Pesticide Labels."

Gather the necessary tools and equipment

- Personal protective clothing & equipment required by the label (e.g., chemical-resistant gloves)
- Sprayer and/or spreader
- Warning signs for outdoor applications (see box about warning signs)

In most of Wisconsin, homeowners are not required by law to place warning signs indicating a pesticide has been applied to their landscape. However, if you wish to do so, Wisconsin law does require that retailers have available free of charge Application Information Sheets and warning signs wherever you purchase landscape pesticides.

Check your Equipment

- Never use leaky equipment.
- Make sure you have the right equipment for the job.
- Make sure you know how to use and clean the equipment.
- Calibrate your equipment, as described in Home PEST brochures #8, "Hand Sprayer Calibration" and #9, "Spreader Calibration."
- Larger jobs (e.g., oversized lots, tall trees) may require the services of a professional.

Prepare the area to be treated

- Keep adults, children, and pets away from the area during treatment and for any time period after treatment that the product label specifies.
- Remove all food, toys, and pet dishes from the area to be treated.
- If you are treating an outdoor area near the house, close nearby windows to prevent the pesticide from entering the house.

Mix the Pesticide

You are now ready to open the pesticide container and add the pesticide (and water if necessary) into your application equipment. Refer to Home PEST brochure #6, "Mixing Pesticides" on how to mix pesticides safely.

When you apply a pesticide

- Wear the proper personal protective clothing and equipment when you apply pesticides. Check the pesticide label and see Home PEST brochure #10, "Personal Protective Equipment."
- Do not smoke, drink, or eat while applying pesticides.
- In a light breeze, keep yourself upwind of the spray nozzle.
- Keep a constant pressure in the sprayer and agitate frequently if necessary.
- Confine your spray to the target area.
- If you should spill or spray pesticide on yourself during an application, stop and clean up immediately.

After you apply a pesticide

- Never open a sprayer when its contents are under pressure. The owner's manual will tell you how to relieve the pressure.
- Clean the equipment you used. Partially fill the sprayer with water, shake, and spray the rinsate onto the treatment area. Repeat this process two more times before properly storing the sprayer. Hose off your spreader before storing it.
- Remove your personal protective clothing and handle according to the instructions given in Home PEST brochure #10, "Personal Protective Equipment."
- Wash any exposed skin with soap and water.