



GARDEN NOTES

MOVE PESTS ASIDE, USE PESTICIDES

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We have become accustomed to applying the word “nuke” to everything from cooking in a microwave oven to applying pesticides and fertilizers. Pesticide use is neither a miracle nor Armageddon. It is a necessary tool for moving pests aside.

“Sometimes the safest and best control measures are avoided because we fear them, or have heard from some neighbor or friend of a friend that they cause mutant plants that will shortly overrun all civilization,” says Jerry Goodspeed, Utah State University horticulturist.

“Some people have such an irrational fear that they act like the owners of pesticide companies spend their time sitting in dark rooms, smoking cigars and dreaming up products that will rape the environment and steal our money. I have met many researchers and executives of chemical companies, and none of them were even remotely like that.”

“Actually, most of the chemical companies are run by people with families just like you and I,” Goodspeed says. These men and women care as much about the environment and the world their children live in as we do. Their companies simply develop products that help get rid of pests that we, the public, have decided are more risky than the control methods.

“I am amazed at the safety precautions and regulations that are imposed in order to secure our safety,” Goodspeed says. “It takes between seven and ten years to get a new product registered for sale. The main reason for this lengthy process is to give the researchers time to run all the tests required to ensure the product's safety.”

On average, only one product in every 20,000 potential products ever makes it to the market. That is not a good success rate - even for a horticulturist, he says. We should be glad that so much testing and research goes into each potential product to ensure its safety and environmental friendliness.

The major problem with pesticides is their misuse, Goodspeed says. Each pesticide comes with a label that explains how the product should be used, stored, disposed of and any warnings or precautions. The label is the law. It must be followed to ensure the safety of the applicator, others in the area and the environment. Many homeowners fail to even read the instructions on the label.

“I remember one incident where an individual applied a chemical to their apple tree, then called me to find out how long to wait before they could harvest their apples,” he recalls. “After a few questions, I recognized that they applied a product that was not registered for use on apples, which means, I had to tell them they couldn't eat the apples . . . ever.”

Pesticides can improve our landscapes, food supply and safety, if used properly, and in accordance with the label, Goodspeed says. They are an effective method to resort to after we have tried eliminating the pest by using cultural and mechanical or other options.

Goodspeed recommends www.pestfacts.com to learn more about the pesticides, their production and the pests they help destroy. The site also features the different tests and safety factors involved in pesticide production. Reading up on the facts may not be sensational, but it could be beneficial.

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