

DIG THIS by Peg Tillery (for 5-21-08) Weeds, Insects, Plants and Pesticides © 2008

Unwanted guests. We've all had them, once or twice, right? No, no, I'm not talking about people; I'm referring to weeds and insects. What's a person to do? Reach for a pesticide? Usually not! Most of the time problems are easily solved without using anything toxic at all.

The word pesticide describes a family of chemicals (whether organic or synthetic): pesticides, herbicides, fungicides and rodenticides. The syllable cide means kill. We humans need to be very cautious when resorting to "cides." Contrary to commercials where the pesticide applicators or homeowners are happily spraying here and there with their hands and faces perfectly unprotected; in real life, caution should absolutely be taken. In real life, protective clothing, face protection and gloves are required. Clothing should also be laundered separately. Run an extra rinse cycle to remove any residue from the washer.

Visit [http://kitsap.wsu.edu/noxious\\_weed/pdf/misc0191.pdf](http://kitsap.wsu.edu/noxious_weed/pdf/misc0191.pdf) to download instructions on safe use of pesticides. Call 360-337-7158 to request a mailed copy or visit the Kitsap Regional Library to print out a copy. Also remember, just because the label says a product is organic, doesn't mean it's safe for people, animals, fish or the environment. Organic products can still kill and/or cause damage.

The first thing to determine when tempted to use a pesticide, is to learn whether there's truly a problem. Bring insects and plant problems to the WSU Extension Office in Bremerton. Collect insects in a closed container (pill bottles and jars work well). Freeze the insect for 24 hours. Make sure you bring in both a healthy section of the plant along with the section that's having problems.

The office is open from 8:30-11:30 a.m. and 12:30-4:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday. If you need to bring samples in on a Friday, call the office first at 360-337-7157, we are short-staffed on Fridays. The Master Gardener hotline is 360-337-7158. You can also email photos to me at [ptillery@co.kitsap.wa.us](mailto:ptillery@co.kitsap.wa.us). Put "insect ID" or "plant ID" in the subject line. Make sure you tell me in the email how large the insect or plant is. It's not always easy to discern size from a photo.

For information on how to control Noxious Weeds, contact Dana Coggon at 360-307-4242 or [dcoggon@co.kitsap.wa.us](mailto:dcoggon@co.kitsap.wa.us). Dana is available for site visits and will write up a weed management plan for you. She is also a licensed pesticide applicator and can answer pesticide questions with regard to weeds if your situation would require pesticide controls.

When you visit the Extension Office with your plant or insect sample we'll ask you a series of questions and also will have you fill out a form listing your contact information and the details you can share about the plant or the insect. This gathering of information helps us diagnose the problem properly. Sometimes we can answer your question

immediately, other times we may have to research it and get back to you in a day or more.

If your last resort becomes using a pesticide always thoroughly read the label, every word of it. The label is the law. Make sure the item you're trying to kill is listed on the label. Make sure the plant you're using the chemical on is listed on the label. Do not use outdoor use products indoors and vice versa. If possible, purchase the smallest amount possible, so you don't have any left over product. For information on disposing of chemicals visit <http://www.kitsapgov.com/sw/modwaste.htm> or call 360-337-5777.

Visit Exttoxnet, maintained by Oregon State University Extension at <http://exttoxnet.orst.edu/> and Washington Toxics Coalition at <http://www.watoxics.org/> for more information on pesticides.