

Look What's Out There

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Household Hazardous Wastes

“Household hazardous waste is the discarded, unused, or leftover portion of household products containing toxic chemicals. These wastes CANNOT be disposed of in regular garbage. Any product which is labeled WARNING, CAUTION, POISONOUS, TOXIC, FLAMMABLE, CORROSIVE, REACTIVE or EXPLOSIVE should be considered hazardous. You can't treat hazardous wastes like other kinds of garbage. For example, buried wastes can filter down through the soil and contaminate groundwater. Plumbing systems can be damaged when corrosive chemicals are put down the drain. Burning hazardous wastes simply distributes them over a larger area and releases them into the air. Pouring hazardous liquids on the ground can poison soil, plants and water (1).

Some examples of hazardous wastes you may find around your house include(1):

- antifreeze
- batteries
- brake fluid
- chemical strippers
- chlorine bleach
- contact cement
- drain cleaners
- fire extinguishers
- flea collars and sprays
- herbicides
- insecticides and insect repellent
- kerosene
- lawn chemicals
- lighter fluid
- lye
- mothballs
- nail polish remover
- old propane tanks
- paints

- pesticides
- pool chemicals
- prescription drugs
- solvents
- spot removers
- stains and finishes
- toilet cleaners
- used motor oil
- oven cleaners

If you do find these products around your home, there are proper ways to dispose of them. It is important to remember that bottles and containers that may be empty should still be disposed of in a safe manner because of residue that remains in the container. The easiest and perhaps best way to deal with household hazardous wastes is through reducing and recycling. It is best to try and reduce the number of hazardous chemicals you have around your house at one time. It is also best to recycle as much as possible by giving leftovers to friends or community organizations. There are many less toxic alternatives to the hazardous materials you may have around the house; please see the links below for some of these alternatives.

Many communities have organized household hazardous waste collection events where these materials are collected and disposed of by local authorities free of charge. Check with your local waste management facility, fire department, or county extension office for more information.”
(B.T. Johnson, November 1997 UCD
EXTOXNET FAQ Team)

Chemical News

- The EPA Office of Pesticide Programs is offering several new documents providing valuable information on pesticide safety and integrated pest management. "Help Yourself to a Healthy Home: Protect you Children's Health" contains information about environmental contaminants found in many homes and how to protect your family from risks posed by carbon monoxide, unhealthy drinking waters, poor indoor air quality, lead poisoning, hazardous household products and pesticides. This booklet is also available in Spanish as "Contribuya a Tener un Hogar Sano." "Join our Pest Patrol: A Backyard Activity Book for Kids on Integrated Pest Management" is geared at elementary school children in grades 3-5. The pamphlet contains 29 pages of fun activities that can easily be incorporated into reading, science, or even math and art classes. It provides kids and teachers with important information about pest identity, biology, and ecology. To order, call Kathy Seikel at 703-308-8272 or seikel.kathy@epa.gov. (EPA Pesticide Programs Update, 1/9/04).
- Based on an online survey conducted by the Evergreen Foundation, 54 percent of respondents don't want more regulation on their yard-care practices. The 611 respondents were owners of single family homes, condominiums, or town homes. More than ninety percent agreed that having a well-maintained lawn improves property values, and that green spaces such as parks should be well maintained. When given a list of lawn pests, homeowners by a wide margin expressed concern about weeds (75 percent), with between 20 and 32 percent concerned about insects, diseases, or vertebrate pests. The Evergreen Foundation's mission is to raise awareness of the environmental, economic, and lifestyle benefits of landscapes, with funding from contributors such as end-user associations and suppliers. (Florida Turf Digest, November/December 2003).
- A total of 167 million acres of genetically engineered crops were planted globally in 2003, which is 15 percent more than 2002, according to the International Service for the acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications. China and South Africa reported the largest percentage increases in 2003 (more than 30 percent) and the increase for the U.S. was ten percent. However, about two-thirds of the world's bioengineered crops are grown in the U.S. (106 million acres). The report also predicted that the global market for these types of crops will be \$4.5 billion in 2004. (Chemical Regulation Reporter, 1/19/04).
- The honeybee, *Apis mellifera*, navigates rapidly and accurately to food sources that are often miles away. They achieve this by learning visual cues, such as the location and color of nectar-bearing flowers, and chemical cues, such as the scent and the taste of the nectar. Researchers in Australia have trained bees to visit differently scented sugar feeders placed at specific outdoor locations and found that the bees can be induced to visit the same locations simply by having the corresponding scent blown into the hive, even when the destinations no longer have the food or carry the scent. A familiar nectar scent can trigger specific memories of a route and therefore expedite navigation to the food source. (Nature, 1/29/04, via AgNet). (Via Chemically Speaking, UF, Feb. 2004)