

The Label is the Law

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Early in my career as a forester I advised a homeowner to use a certain pesticide to treat an insect problem he was having. He called me back a week later to tell me that after he followed my advice, his plant was killed. How could that be? After talking with him a little bit more he advised me that he used the concentrated product full strength without mixing it. It did not occur to me to include any instructions

for the product use as it seemed self-explanatory. Since that experience every product recommendation from me comes with the words, *“Make sure you read and follow the label instructions when mixing and applying the product”*.

All pesticides, herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, and even fertilizers are required to have a label. The label contains all the necessary information needed to use the product safely. In addition to causing unintended plant damage, the misapplication of landscape products can mean harmful residues, or long-lasting injury.

The purpose of the label is to legally describe how the product is to be used as well as how the product should not be used. Generally, the pesticide label contains:

- **Where the product can be used.** This might include what plants, or locations the product is intended for. This is important for a couple of reasons. For instance, if the label prohibits use on edible plants, you will not want to use it on your vegetables.

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- **What pests are controlled.** Some labels will have general descriptions of pests while others will be more specific. An example of a general description might be “lawn pests”, whereas a specific example might include “chinch bugs”.
- **How to apply the product.** This might include a backpack sprayer, or if it is a granular product, it might mention a spreader setting. Another thing that is often mentioned in this section includes temperatures, or days after rainfall. A common example goes back to herbicides we use to kill weeds in turf. Some products are not meant to be used when average temperatures are above 90 degrees and can kill or stress the turf when used during warm weather.
- **The rate of application.** These instructions include instructions for mixing the product such as how much the product should be diluted, and what settings the sprayer, or spreader should be put on.
- How often the product should be applied as well as how much time should pass before you can harvest or enter the area.
- One of the most important parts of the label spells out **what kind of protective equipment you should be wearing** while applying the product. For instance, a common statement includes the wearing of long sleeve shirts or closed toed shoes. In addition the label also includes important first aid instructions.
- **How to store and dispose of the product after you have applied it.** Following the label directions will help you control the pest you want to control, protect yourself, your family, and the environment while you are using the product.

For more information on pesticide labels go to :

<https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/PI141>

<https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/duval/> email duval@ifas.ufl.edu phone (904) 255-7450