



Columbia Nursery

Smart & Safe Use of Garden Chemicals – Columbia Nursery

Understanding how to safely and effectively use garden treatments can make a big difference in the health of your plants and your overall success as a gardener. This guide introduces the basics of using both organic and synthetic (man-made) products, and shares tips to minimize the need for them in the first place.

Organic vs. Inorganic Products

- Organic products are derived from natural substances such as minerals or plant-based compounds.
 - Inorganic (synthetic) products are typically petroleum-based and manufactured.
- Regardless of the type, always learn how a product works and what it's best suited for before applying it.

Prevention Is the Best Defense

Good gardening practices can greatly reduce your need for chemical treatments:

- Use mulch to suppress weeds.
- Hand-pull weeds before they go to seed.
- Keep soil moisture even to prevent fungal issues.
- Use drip irrigation instead of overhead sprinklers for susceptible plants.
- Clean up fallen fruit and debris to prevent pests from overwintering.
- Prune for airflow and avoid overcrowding to reduce plant stress.
- Choose the right plant for the right place to avoid unnecessary problems.

General Application Guidelines

1. Know what you're treating and choose the best product for that problem. Products work in two ways:
 - Systemic: Absorbed into the plant or pest's system (like taking medicine).
 - Topical/Contact: Works on the surface, often coating pests or plant surfaces (like applying lotion).
2. Always follow label directions. Never assume more is better; overuse can be harmful.
3. Use caution, even with natural products. Wash hands and clothing after use. Wear protective gear as instructed.
4. Check the weather. Apply on calm, dry mornings. Avoid rain, wind, cold snaps, and bright sun right after application.
5. Store and dispose of products properly. Keep liquids from freezing. Triple rinse empty containers and use local hazardous waste disposal days.
6. Label your containers. Write the dilution rate and purchase year with permanent marker. Replace old products after 5 years.
7. Use separate sprayers. Have one for weed control and one for plant treatments. Clean sprayers regularly.

Need Help Identifying a Problem?

Bring a sample of the affected plant to the experts at Columbia Nursery. We're happy to help diagnose the issue and recommend the right solution.