

# Staying safe around gardening products

Weed killers, pest sprays, fertilisers and other gardening products can be harmful. Take extra care when using, storing, and disposing of these to protect yourself, your whānau and the environment.

Many garden products have chemicals and can be hazardous if not used correctly. Make your home and garden safer by choosing products that are as gentle as possible, and by getting rid of old products you don't use.

Call 111 in an emergency.

Call Healthline on 0800 611 116 for medical advice.

Call the National Poisons Centre on 0800 764 766 for poisons advice.

## Before you start

Before you buy new gardening products, think about whether the job you want to do could be done another way, for example, pulling weeds by hand. You can get advice to help you select the safest and most effective product for the job from the staff at your garden shop, or look online.

Read the label. The label has the information you need to keep yourself and others safe, like whether to wear gloves and what to do in an emergency. Products that are labelled 'natural', 'organic', or 'environmentally friendly' can still be hazardous.

## Take care while you garden

- If you are working near or on edible plants, check the label to see whether the product is safe to use near food crops, and if used nearby, how long you need to wait before the plant or vegetable is safe to eat.
- Wear gloves, and check the label to see if you need other protection, like a face mask or safety glasses.
- Keep products away from your eyes and face, and off your skin.
- Choose a calm day if spraying. The wind can blow products into your eyes and face, or onto other people.
- Be very careful if you are working near streams or other water. Many garden products should not be used near water. Check the label.

## Protect the bees and other pollinators

- Try using other options, such as weeding and mulching, instead of chemical products and sprays.
- Cut your lawn less and don't worry about letting clover flowers grow. They are food for bees. Let dandelions flower and mow them before they go to seed. Think about cutting smaller areas of lawn on a rotation so there are more flowers for pollinators.

- Don't spray garden chemicals near budding or flowering plants where bees and other insects are likely to forage. Spray in dry conditions and avoid spraying when it is windy; it's safer for you too. Spot treat where you can and avoid blanket spraying an entire area. Spray after sunset.

## When you've finished

- Wash yourself and the clothes you were wearing.
- Wash any other areas that came into unintended contact with the gardening products.
- Dispose of garden products safely. Check the label for instructions. You may need to contact your local council or ask at the shop where you bought it for advice on safe disposal.

## Storing gardening products

- Store high up or in a locked cupboard or cabinet and in a well-ventilated area.
- You may need to keep products away from heat or damp. Check the label.
- Keep away from water, food, pet food and medicines.
- Keep products in their original bottle or box. This is important – the safety information you need is on the label and the packaging may be designed so it does not react to the contents inside.
- Seal and clean all containers properly before you put them away. Clean any drips or spills from the outside of the bottle or container

## Protect children and pets

- Keep young children and pets away while you are using gardening products.
- Read the label to check how long you must keep away from an area after it has been treated. Follow this advice carefully. If you are spraying and there is nothing on the label to tell you to stay away from the area, keep children and pets away at least until the spray has dried.
- Pellet-type products, such as slug bait and fertilisers could be attractive to young children and pets – take care when using these in your garden.
- Never transfer garden products into food or drink containers. Children may not know the difference and eat or drink the contents.
- If you throw away old or unused products in your household waste, make sure the rubbish bin is somewhere children and pets can't access, and that the product cannot leak from the waste before it is collected. Check the label to make sure it can be included in your household waste.

