

10 Steps for Selecting Pesticides

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Most home use pesticides are purchased off store shelves with minimal information from store clerks or often without any information. Considering the environmental, safety, efficacy and financial concerns of purchasing and applying pesticides, I'd like to share ten helpful considerations for selecting the appropriate pesticide.

1. **Correctly identify the pest.** A plant pathology professor once said, "the key is to correctly identify the pest and the rest is a cookbook". His point is well taken. Without correct identification, control measures are at best a gamble.
2. **Read the product label.** Verify your particular pest is listed.
3. **Read the "Precautionary Statements".** Be aware of the potential health and environmental risks.
4. **Do you have the appropriate application equipment?** Most pesticides require specific application devices to be applied safely, evenly and at the proper rate.
5. **Review the rates.** Calculate how many gallons of spray mixture the product will make. If it's packaged in a quantity greater than you can use within a two year period, choose another product or a smaller package.
6. **Not all pesticides are the same** and will exhibit one or more of the following qualities: They may work on contact, or can be locally systemic or completely systemic. They may have curative properties, or only work as protectants. They could be organic, synthetic, mineral, biological, synthetic/organic or combinations of the above. Preference for one or more of these qualities will help you select one product over another.
7. **Look for alternative uses** on other turf and ornamental pests common in your landscape. Multiple landscape uses may provide advantages for one product over another.
8. **Check the chemical group or class.** Rotating two or three materials from different chemical classes will reduce the chances of building resistance.
9. **Check for ease of use.** Some products are very concentrated and may require difficult-to-use measuring, handling or safety equipment.
10. **Calculate the cost per gallon of mixed spray.** If more than one product meets your criteria, select the material with the lowest cost per gallon of mixed spray.