All pesticides are not created equal

Sometimes in the gardening world, certain terms are tossed around as if they’re interchangeable. The word pesticide includes products such as herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, bactericides, rodenticides, etc. It’s basically any labeled product designed to control a pest.

Each of these different pesticides contain many different active ingredients, concentrations and modes of action that are designed to target specific pests, or in some cases, a broad range of related pests. Therefore, it’s important to identify the type of pest you want to control, the site in which it is to be used and then select the pesticide best designed to control the target pest.

With all the different products available, consumer labeling can be confusing. For example, Ortho® has several products labeled Bug-b-gone or Weed-b-gone, but each one may have different chemicals in them, different sites in which they may be used and pests they control. Another example is Roundup®. Not all Roundup® products contain just glyphosate anymore, which has been the main active ingredient for many years, and still is. Instead, some of the products have other ingredients as well. The products are still labeled as Roundup®, but those with added ingredients have an addition to the title, such as “Extended Control, Weed & Grass Killer, Plus Weed Preventer” or “Poison Ivy & Tough Brush Killer Plus.”

The problem consumers run into is they see the familiar word Roundup® on the label, think it is simply the traditional weed killer with glyphosate in it, purchase it and apply it to an area for which it’s not meant.

Another common situation is the use of agricultural products used in the home landscape and garden. Folks in rural areas have easy access to products labeled for control of pests in pastures and other agricultural areas that may have the same ingredient as home consumer products. However, these products often are formulated differently and have different rates listed on the label. Using these products in the home landscape often leads to dead or damaged landscape plants.

The moral of the story is this: read the Label BEFORE purchasing any pesticide and follow label directions to the T!

Oklahoma State University Extension is not affiliated with any products mentioned. Consumers are urged to do their own research and read the labels before purchasing.

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