



Volunteer Program

Tulare/Kings Counties

Cleaning Out Leftovers from the Garden Shed

by Sharon Plein, UC Master Gardener

If your garden shed or shelf is cluttered with old dusty containers and torn bags, it's time to do some housecleaning, garden style. The first step in cleaning out the garden shed is to divide the contents into categories, such as: fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides, and other pesticides. Unlabeled or unidentifiable products should be removed for safe disposal. Once you have categorized your "leftovers," the decisions to dispose of, or to continue to use and store these products is simplified.

Fertilizers: The fertilizer category can be divided into dry or liquid, and mineral or organic types. Fertilizers usually come in a dry granular form composed of mined minerals and are packaged in plastic bags to keep out moisture. The mineral composition of these fertilizers does not break down and will last indefinitely. Clumps in the bags of fertilizers means that moisture has been absorbed. Simply break up the clumps of fertilizer before spreading it.

Liquid fertilizers may last for years in an undiluted form. They may separate or crystalize over time and require a good shaking to mix them.

Packaged organic fertilizers contain once-living components like blood or bone meal, raw or composted manure, or composted plant materials. Their shelf life depends on the chemical ingredients, and may last from twelve months to five years.

Weed and Feed or All-in-One types of fertilizer products also contain synthetic or organic pesticides and manufacturers generally claim an effective shelf life of two to four years. If you doubt the effectiveness of any product, consult the product's label or manufacturer for the "use by" date or recommendations for use. Most product labels can be found online.

Store all fertilizers in a cool dry place and avoid leaving them in direct sun or heat. Large plastic buckets or boxes are the perfect "leftover" storage solution for big bags of fertilizers. Seal or clip the bags shut and write the date of purchase on the bag with a large marker. If bags are old, torn, or fragile then dump the fertilizer contents into their own labeled plastic container. Place liquid products in their original containers in tin cans, buckets or boxes to prevent leakage or breakage.

Herbicides: Pesticides that control or kill weeds are called herbicides. Weeds are simply defined as a "plant growing in the wrong place." Weeds can be grass or broadleaf plants, herbaceous or woody plants, and small or



Used pesticide containers



Don't toss the trash

large plants. Pre-emergence herbicide products prevent seed from germinating and post-emergence products kill or control existing weeds. There are specific or selective herbicides designed to combat weeds growing in a variety of garden locations: lawns and groundcovers, flowers and vegetables, and shrubs and trees. Other herbicides are non-selective, meaning that it will kill or harm any treated plant, and they are generally used in non-garden areas of the yard.

Herbicide products are packaged as granules, powders, and liquids. Many come in a ready-mix sprayer or in a variety of concentrations that are mixed with water and sprayed on plants. Most products have a shelf life of four years when stored properly out of heat and direct sunlight in their original container. Do not mix more herbicide than you think you will use in one application and never pour herbicides down any indoor or outdoor drains. Determine which herbicides to keep and which to properly throw away. Place broken bags in plastic containers and boldly label them.



City of Visalia Dump On Us 2015

Fungicides, Insecticides, Rodenticides, and Snail Baits: All pesticide products need to be handled carefully because they are poisons that can harm humans, pets and wildlife. They should be stored in sealed containers away from direct sun and heat and used within two years. Some pesticides that are designed to be mixed with water will break down or become ineffective, if stored improperly or for too long. You will know your pesticide is ineffective if the pesticide solution separates, if dry powders are lumpy and do not mix with water, or if an emulsifiable concentrate does not produce a milky solution. Dry or granular pesticide products are designed to be sprinkled into the soil. They should be securely stored away from pets and out of reach of children.

Pesticide and Hazardous Waste Disposal: Do not dump left-over or unused gardening products into the soil, drains or garbage cans. Improper disposal of unwanted products is a serious threat to the environment. Small amounts of insecticide can harm unintended beneficial organisms. If you have mixed more pesticide than is required, ask a neighbor whether they can use it or pour into a plastic container and label it. You can turn this in on a Dump On Us day.

The City of Visalia, in collaboration with Tulare County, sponsors a household hazardous waste collection site located at 335 North Cain Street. It is a free service open to Tulare County residents on Saturdays from 8 am to 1pm, except on "Dump On Us" days when it is open from 7am to noon.

Many other cities have their own waste collection sites. A visit to a household hazardous waste disposal site is the perfect solution to the problem of safely discarding leftovers and unwanted products from your garden shed. We all need to help protect our environment!

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