

It seems that pests are the most annoying part of gardening. Our gardens would look beautiful if it weren't for insects, diseases and weeds. If we didn't have to spend time dealing with these pests, we would have more time to enjoy our garden. If left alone, Mother Nature has ways to balance out the pests on our plants. It's a long process, and sometimes, the pests win out. Research and science have developed ways to intervene in the process of plant damage from pests. Sprays make it convenient to deter insects, prevent disease and kill weeds. These tips for spraying basics apply to both chemical and organic sprays.

**Identify the pest and the host** before applying anything. Identifying the plant will help identify what the problem is. If you are having difficulty identifying the host and/or pest, contact a Purple Person at Al's to help you. Bring in a fresh sample of the flower, leaf and stem in a ziplock bag. We have many plant experts on staff and an extensive library of reference books to help identify plants, weeds, insects and diseases. We can help you select the right product for the right problem.

**Read and follow the directions** before using the product. Look for information about how to apply the product, mixing instructions, disposal and personal protective equipment to wear. Always wear long sleeves, long pants, waterproof shoes or boots and chemical resistant gloves. Put this on before you open and mix the product. Keep your protective equipment on while you spray and during clean up. Some chemicals may require goggles, mask or respirator, hat or other special equipment. Wash your hands before eating, drinking, using tobacco products and using the restroom.

**Measure carefully** if you are mixing a concentrate with water. Using too much product may damage your plant, or at the very least, waste product. Using too little may not be effective. Mix up only what you can use in one day. Designate a set of measuring spoons and cups for chemicals only and do not place them anywhere they might be used for food. If, after spraying, you have product leftover, it's best to spray it on similar plants until it's gone. For instance, leftover herbicide (weed killer) could be sprayed along a fence line, or leftover fungicide could be sprayed on other plants listed on the label as a preventive.

**Dispose** of the empty container in a responsible manner. When the product is gone, triple rinse the container and use the rinse water in your last batch of mix. Punch a hole in the container so it cannot accidentally be re-used and recycle the container. Rinse your sprayer or applicator to remove all residue.

**Apply** products on a calm dry day so your product stays where you intend and will not drift to other plants or your neighbor's plants. Add Bonide Turbo Spreader Sticker to your mix to help the product work better and remain on the plant longer in case of rain.