Pesticides, Pets, and Children
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So you've finally identified the villain in your rose garden. That secret night stalker that can be smaller than a pin head that has been chewing up the foliage, deforming buds and making lace-work of flowers and foliage alike.

Of course the next step is a quick trip to your local garden center for the appropriate pesticide guaranteed to obliterate the "nasties" that are keeping you awake at night with their munching and crunching and pushing your dreams of that elusive Queen back into next year.

You smile as you unwrap the package and patiently read each and every tiny word, no matter how miniscule, neatly printed on the label or carefully folded origami-style and secreted in the tiny hiding place under the cap.

"Ahh," you say to yourself, "this will do the trick." So armed with the best, the latest, the most modern and advanced, and bolstered by the money-back, sure-fire guarantee of promised success, you head out into the garden to lay waste to the uninvited guests at the banquet of floral delights you unwittingly provided.

You have taken into consideration the type of applicator, mixing exactly the correct amount in the manner suggested. The conditions are close to perfect, no breeze to cause drift into areas where you don't want the pesticide to settle such as some ornamentals that might discolor, water supplies or pools, or some edible crops that can absorb toxic levels of systemic pesticides that might end up on your dinner table.

Feeling like a space traveler in your protective costume of brimmed hat, long-sleeved shirt, goggles, mask, gloves, and pants tucked into rubber boots, you nonetheless apply your material, confident that you have followed all the directions and know all the safety precautions regarding the preparation, application, handling and storage of potentially dangerous pesticides.

You settle back with a satisfied smile after disposing of unused spray material, carefully cleaning the applicator, storing the stock materials in a cool, dark, locked storage area. Your hair is still damp after your trek to the laundry room where you washed your spray costume and took a quick shower to wash away any spray that might still cling to your hair or face or any exposed surface.

The early evening air is still calm as you relax on a lawn chair with a refreshing beverage at hand. Your eyes sweep about the yard, admiring the play of light and color, making a few mental notes about the next project that will need your attention ... when the sound of the kids playing ball and Rover chasing Fluffy reaches your ears. I'll bet you thought your worries were over because you had discharged your responsibility in a very mature fashion.
The responsibility incurred when you spray or dust with a pesticide does not, however, end with the turn of a key or the obligatory shower. Every year hundreds of children and pets fall unsuspecting victim to pesticides they accidentally encounter in their environment.

If foliage is damp, children and pets should be keep away until the material is completely dried. Powders and dusts are another matter since they pose a potential hazard as long as they remain on plants at eye level and whose white powder may invite a taste or be inhaled by the unsuspecting.

The responsibility of the home gardener doesn't end with compliance to safety regulations laid down by the government but extends to an everyday vigilance over the lives of everyone and everything that may come in contact with the pesticide you used.

Knowing or posting the number of your local Poison Control Center near the phone is the first step in being prepared - just in case. The symptoms of pesticide intoxication in children or pets in most cases are more subtle than those found in adults, but they include sluggishness, lethargy, loss of appetite, diarrhea, vomiting, inability to concentrate, muscle weakness, twitching, slight tremors or excessive salivation. Some may exhibit a rapid, thready heartbeat and may even have seizures. All these symptoms indicate stress on the central nervous system.

Sometimes in children it is difficult to diagnose or differentiate between pesticide poisoning and common childhood illnesses such as bronchitis, pneumonia, head trauma, coma or even diabetes. One of the most important and tell-tale symptoms, however, is pin-point pupils.

Pets pose another problem since they sometimes roam through your spray material without your knowledge. Pesticides can be absorbed through the mucous membranes of the mouth, nose and eyes directly into the blood stream when they contact these moist surfaces. Even after a systemic pesticide has dried, if your pets chew or eat plant material that has a residue on it or in it, they can absorb toxic, possibly lethal levels of pesticides.

Powders may cling to Rover or Fluffy's coat and can be absorbed at a slower rate, through the skin or dermal layer. Pesticides can be brought into your living areas, both on your pet's coat and on the foot pads, thereby exposing anyone in your household to the potential dangers of pesticides right there in the family room while you are watching the evening news.

And just when you thought it was safe to .....