Use and dispose of fuels and hazardous products properly

Fuels and other household hazardous products that are improperly used, stored or disposed can enter groundwater and surface water supplies, impacting water quality and human health.

Household products are hazardous if they include ingredients that, when improperly managed, pose dangers to human health or the environment. A variety of household products are hazardous. Motor oil, pesticides, oil-based paints, mothballs, flea collars, weed killers, medicine, and household cleaners may seem like everyday items, but are examples of household hazardous products.

Specifically, a substance is considered hazardous if it is corrosive, explosive, flammable, or if it contains toxic chemicals or any other potentially harmful materials.

Proper use, storage and disposal of fuels and petroleum products

- Store small amounts of fuel (a couple of gallons at a time) for motorized equipment in a dry, well-ventilated space away from the house and in an UL-approved container.
- Use all stored fuel for motorized equipment by the end of each season.
- Examine storage containers and equipment often for leaks and repair promptly.
- Do not fill machines with fuel or perform maintenance near drinking water wells, storm drains and surface waters. Watch for spills and clean-up right away.
- Recycle used motor oil. Many transfer stations accept used motor oil free of charge.

Properly dispose of other hazardous products such as automotive fluids, degreasers, oil-based paints and paint thinner, etc. at the RI Eco-depot (401) 942-1430 x 241—NEVER in the backyard, down a drain, or in the trash.

Consider replacing underground fuel tanks (for home heating fuel) with properly contained above-ground tanks. Check all laws that apply, contact your local building official.

Motorized equipment that is not regularly and properly maintained can result in gasoline or oil leaks. As little as one gallon of gasoline can contaminate groundwater above health advisory levels. Gasoline may also contain additives like MTBE, which is highly soluble in water, and once in the groundwater, can move quickly and be very difficult to clean up.

Fertilizer and pesticide use

- Minimize the use of fertilizers and pesticides. Use non-chemical options where possible. Purchase only the amount of fertilizer and pesticides needed and use these products according to the directions specified on the manufacturer's label.
Purchase only the amount of fertilizer and pesticides needed and use these products according to the directions specified on the manufacturer's label. Store these products in a dry, well-ventilated spot in their original containers.

Properly dispose of leftover products at the RI Eco-Depot (401) 942-1430 xt. 241 or give to others who can use them. Never dump extra in the backyard, down a drain or in the trash.

Do not fill fertilizer spreaders and pesticide sprayers or apply them near a drinking water well, storm drain or surface water and be mindful of spills. If spills occur, clean up promptly and do not allow them to wash away with stormwater.

**General tips for all hazardous products**

- Follow the product manufacturer's label carefully. The effectiveness, use and safety of a product are based on the directions specified in the label.
- Buy only what you can use in a relatively short time.
- Search out neighbors, community organizations, schools, or others who may be able to use surplus household products.
- Recycle wastes whenever possible.
- Do not mix products. Mixing different chemicals together for use can result in explosive or poisonous chemical reactions.
- Keep products in their original, labeled containers and out of the reach of children.
- Do not burn empty containers, as fumes may be harmful.
- Learn to recognize which household products are considered hazardous. Consider using nontoxic, non-hazardous alternatives.

For more information:

- The Rhode Island Resource Recovery, RI Eco-Depot
  - www.rrrc.org
  - (401) 942-1430 x 241
  - Information and educational materials on household hazardous waste disposal, safe alternatives and recycling

- URI Home*A*Syst Program
  - web.uri.edu/safewater
  - (401) 874-5398
  - Information on protecting your drinking water

**URI Master Gardener Hotline:**
- 1 (800) 448-1011 (M-Th, 9AM to 2 PM)
- Call to get your gardening questions answered