

## Ways to Reduce Household Hazardous Waste

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This Saturday, Vanderburgh County will be holding its annual Tox Away Day. This is our program to collect and safely dispose of household hazardous wastes. We will be at the Evansville Civic Center parking lot, located at Walnut Street and SE Ninth Street, from 9 am to 1 pm. This program is sponsored by the Vanderburgh County Solid Waste District.

I spoke a bit last week about the reasons for handling household hazardous waste differently than other waste. About how these products may be toxic to unprotected trash collectors, or could harm the environment and our community's health if they begin leaking in the truck or at the landfill. Some of these wastes are hazardous because they can be flammable or explosive. Liquid wastes poured down the drain can contaminate our rivers or groundwater, or disrupt our septic systems.

Although storing your household hazardous wastes for our once-per-year Tox Away Day is good, I'd like to cover some steps to reduce the amount of hazardous waste each of us generates on a daily basis.

Wherever possible, try to cut down on purchasing potentially hazardous products. Instead of buying drain cleaners, consider using a plunger or plumber's snake. These will manually remove blocks. To reduce the sludge coating drain lines, pour a large pot of boiling water down the drain. The heat will soften and loosen sludge and clogs.

Consider reducing your purchase of products that contain hazardous ingredients. Learn about the use of alternative methods or products - without hazardous ingredients - for some common household needs. When shopping for items such as multipurpose household cleaners, toilet cleaners, laundry detergent, dish soap, dishwashing machine pods and gels, bug sprays and insect pest control, consider shopping for environmentally friendly, natural products. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has a list of "safer choice" products on their website: <https://www.epa.gov/saferchoice> .

(Please note: many of the home remedies and "alternative products" sold online or promoted on the internet are not necessarily safer to you or the environment; nor have they have not been tested by unbiased sources to see if they actually work. Please research them carefully!)

Reduce pesticide usage by adapting more cultural management tools in the garden. Learn to plant, fertilize, irrigate, and prune correctly. Use mulch to reduce weeds, and plant resistant cultivars of flowers, vegetables, and ornamentals.

When you need to buy pesticides or other toxic products, buy smaller containers that can be used up in one season. If you have excess products, store the containers properly, according to their label directions. This will prevent breakdown of the chemicals by cold, heat, or sunlight. Be sure that a legible label is always attached to stored products.

For more information on Tox Away Day or reducing chemical usage, please contact the Purdue Extension Service at (812) 435-5287.