

## NEW CHEMICALS REQUIRE CARE IN HANDLING

By Wilbur W. Burkhart

An innocent looking bottle, a curious youngster at play and we have the ingredients of a tragedy. So it is that accidents don't just happen, they are caused—caused in such a way that no one can be blamed for having set a trap for someone to stumble into. The cause is often due to a chain of events leading up to the final tragic accident and the one link of that chain that later turns up to be a big mistake is so often so trivial that it would seem unimportant by itself.

At Tulelake, it was a bottle of insect killer being used to furnish the liquid for making mud pies that took the life of a child. In Hood River, it was simply a case of spilling a bottle of the same kind of insecticide that struck down the six-year old boy. A little more than a year ago, several children at Forest Grove became victims of a new type mole poison. In this case it was not serious so far as it could be determined but the possible later life effect is still with them. All of these incidents add up to a need for greater care and caution in handling and storing newer types of chemicals.

Today's agriculture brings disease and insect problems for the farmer growing any kind of a crop. Average homeowners in the Pacific Northwest are confronted with the same problems in connection with the growing of flowers, shrubs or a vegetable garden and the demand is for something to rid them of the never ending garden troubles. Result is the use of chemicals that have been found effective in controlling the insect or disease causing the trouble.

It seems odd that suddenly chemicals are causing accidents of a serious nature. Why? Well, let's think back a few years and recall how large automobile engines used to be. In spite of their size, they developed little horse-

power for their size. Today the horsepower of our automobile engines is the greatest it has ever been and yet the size is getting smaller. The first telephones, radios, electric motors and a dozen other items have gotten smaller at the same time they are capable of doing the same job but a lot more in a better way.

Chemicals used in agriculture have been advanced in the same manner. New ones possess tremendous power in small quantities almost to the point of our no longer being able to understand their use. Take 2 4-D, for example, when used as a weed killer and its failure to do the jobs claimed for it. In nearly all cases of failure, it is found that the user had applied too much of the chemical because he couldn't understand how a couple tablespoons of 2, 4-D concentrate in a gallon of water could hurt any weed. The lack of size or amount of modern machines and chemicals fail to impress us enough as to what their great strength amounts to.

Newer chemicals used in agriculture have various ways of causing injury to the handler. A person taking a curious "whiff" just to see what the chemicals smelled like might easily become handicapped as a result. A hurried cleanup of spilled material by an unprotected workman or someone who merely stopped his automobile along a roadside to watch an airplane dusting a field could easily result in a serious illness or loss of life. No longer is it necessary for a person to inhale or drink an agricultural chemical to become seriously affected. The skin will absorb enough toxic material and produce the same results as if the victim had mistakenly drank the liquid or inhaled the poisonous dust or fumes.

Most dangerous are those classified as organic phosphate type insecticides. They include TEPP

and PARATHION as the more commonly used materials. Users are cautioned by the manufacturer regarding safe use of the materials. Safety precautions include a complete set of protective clothing in addition to a special respirator designed to eliminate the tricky fumes that go through ordinary gas masks and respirators. A person properly equipped to spray or dust these materials would look something like a deep sea diver except for the special breathing device or respirator.

In short, these materials are dangerous and must be respected in any quantity. Home gardeners may be tempted to use this type of material which is ordinarily not available for such use but might be given them by a farmer friend. THE USE OF SUCH MATERIAL BY THE HOME GARDENER IS INVITING DISASTER. Most of us don't have the time to take the proper precautions as we do our gardening during spare moments and there is always the audience of small fry around to satisfy their curiosity about the dust or spray we are using.

Let's all be more careful with questionable materials. We may

not have children around but there's always the little fellow from down the block who drops by to admire your garden and tool house. He may only need to stumble and upset a bottle to make us all sorry. No one of us can be too careful. How about going through our garden chemicals right away and getting rid of that stuff that has lost its label? At the same time remember that the man who empties the trash can is human too. Give him a break by burying such lethal materials in a deep, deep hole.

O Lord, who lends me life, lend me a heart replete with thankfulness.—Shakespeare.

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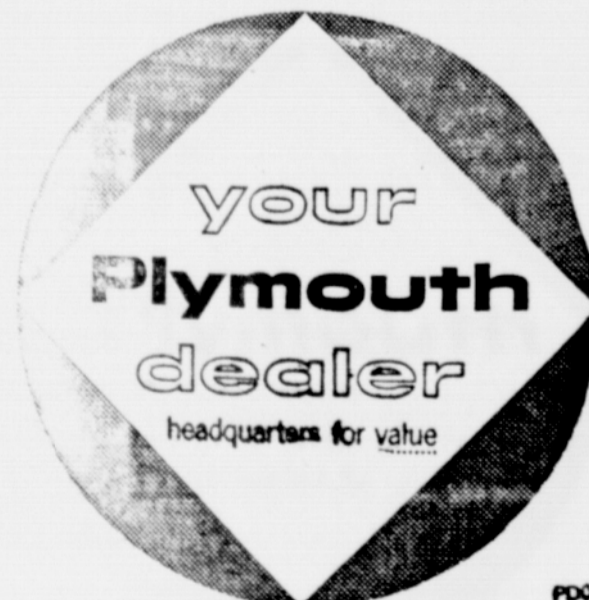
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