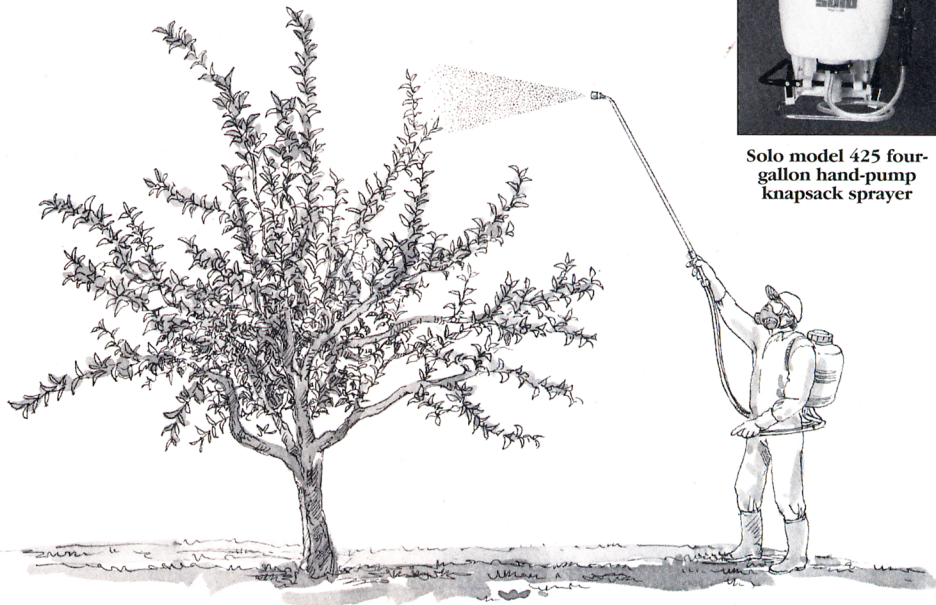


Power Sprayers

Choosing the right tool
for reaching
overhead

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Solo model 425 four-gallon hand-pump knapsack sprayer

I'VE NEVER MET a gardener who likes to spray. Most of us do as little of it as we can, resorting to pesticides only when we can't find another solution. In my garden, I spray to keep fruit hanging on the six apple trees that came with the place. If I didn't, I would lose nearly every apple to "June drop," a phrase that describes what happens when the tiny fruits fall off the branches a few weeks after flowering, victims of the plum curculio larvae feeding inside each one.

Any garden task, even one performed reluctantly, deserves to be done right. Choosing when to spray and what to spray are both important decisions. They require that you know something about the life cycle of the pest you are trying to control and something about the range of death the pesticide will cause. And after you have picked your poison and decided on the best time to apply it, there is still the issue of selecting the best equipment for the job.

The goal in applying most pesticides is to spread an even layer over a plant's sur-

face. Dusting with a dry powder is one way to do this, but dust sometimes fails to adhere to leaves and stems. For this reason pesticides are more often applied as a liquid. To further minimize the amount of pesticide that is needed, the liquid is generally applied as a fine spray. Too fine a spray, however, can bring its own problems, for the finer the mist, the harder it is to propel it great distances, and the more likely it is to be deflected from its intended target by air currents.

Pesticide drift isn't a great concern when you have only a single aphid-infested houseplant to spray. In this case, you simply fill a one-quart squeeze-bottle mister with insecticidal soap, take the pot outside, and give the leaves a thorough wetting in the lee of the back porch. Drift isn't much of an issue with roses, either. You can take a one-and-a-half-gallon tank sprayer from plant to plant on a calm morning and give each hybrid tea a drenching. When you start spraying larger shrubs and trees, how-

ever, spraying becomes riskier and much more difficult. It's bad enough if you are spraying horizontally; it's worse if you are aiming overhead. Then spray can easily rain back down on you, or, worse yet, be caught by an air current that carries it onto someone or something else.

In their eagerness to sell their products to gardeners, the manufacturers of large sprayers do us a real disservice with their advertisements—the ones portraying men and women directing spray high into the canopies of trees while dressed only in sneakers, cloth trousers, and short-sleeved shirts. In reality, those engaged in this activity should be shown sweating inside a spray suit, hands and feet cooking inside rubber gloves and boots, a respirator clamped over mouth and nose, glasses fogging.

The only way to make spraying pleasant is to make it short and efficient. Ever since I started spraying my apple trees 15 years ago, I have been on the lookout for better equipment. My trees, unlike those that have been grafted onto dwarf-