

Hazardous waste: what can be done?

Dr Sue Milton-Dean & Dr W. Richard J. Dean

From time to time when we collect green garden garbage for our compost industry we find, tucked away among the fresh green leaves, an assortment of empty bottles, cans and packets of pesticides used by the gardener to kill perceived pests. We have to set these aside because they are categorised as ‘hazardous waste’. We cannot simply throw the containers into the town dump – we would be contravening several National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) regulations if we did so, as well as the National Environmental Management Waste Act (Act No. 59 of 2008), Government Gazette No 278, 10 March 2009.

The disposal of hazardous waste is something that confronts all the citizens of Prince Albert. Hazardous waste, as listed in Act 59, includes a wide range of materials used in the home and workplace. Paints, pesticides, energy saving light bulbs, batteries (not just car batteries, but all batteries of any kind, including rechargeable and torch batteries), empty containers of any poisons used to kill garden pests or weeds, asbestos cladding, corrosive and oxidising substances, cleaning materials, solvents, and any heavy metals such as mercury or lead are hazardous waste. Moreover, electrical and electronic equipment and components such as broken television sets, burnt-out computers, cell phones that have given up the ghost, are also classified as hazardous waste, for which there are rules and regulations regarding their disposal. The bottom line is that any waste that can have a detrimental impact on health and the environment is hazardous, and cannot simply be thrown into the town dump.

A year or two ago, confronted with a particular problem of disposing of some poisonous materials, we contacted the Prince Albert Municipality for guidance, for their solution to the problem of the disposal of hazardous waste. As expected, they neither have any policy regarding hazardous waste, nor had they any suggestions, apart from a cavalier response that we should take the material, at our expense, to a hazardous waste disposal facility at Vissershof landfill site near Cape Town.

The dilemma we face, and faced by all consumers of garden care products, was brought home to us again today. During a Health and Safety inspection of our premises, the official inspecting our ‘poison storage’ observed that we had empty containers of slug

and caterpillar killers in our safely locked poison cupboard. These are ex-garden waste – prizes we had no wish to win - and are not used in our nursery (we do not use any poisons except a herbicide to kill trees). He said we must dispose of the containers. We asked how, and the reply was that the Municipality should deal with the problem. Well, we’ve been round and round with this situation.

The relevant piece from the permit issued to PAM on 31 August 2018, states that no hazardous waste should be dumped at the town ‘landfill’ site. The proximity of the site to the Dorps River means that floods could move toxic chemicals and other materials downstream or into the ground water. Some solution to hazardous waste disposal must be found. The disposal of hazardous waste locally is, of course, the responsibility of the Prince Albert Municipality. The PAM could set up an alternative waste facility for disposing of hazardous waste or could work with businesses that sell hazardous materials to provide a communal storage facility so that accumulated hazardous materials can be transported legally and cost-effectively to the appropriate disposal site. In fact, the Prince Albert Integrated Management Plan of 2018 has, as one of its objectives (Objective 6.1) ‘Promote safe handling, storage, transportation and disposal of hazardous waste’. This not only seems to have subsequently fallen off the agenda, but completely off the wagon, since there is no mention of hazardous waste in the 2020/21 IDP Review dated 2 July 2020.

We have yet to receive a reply from the Prince Albert Municipality in response to the questions raised, and will follow this important issue up in the next edition of the *PA Friend*.

PRINCE OF AFRICA

mohair

Cape Mohair super-soft blankets in the most glorious colours.
 Jerseys, beanies, berets, knitting yarn and needles,
 Ponchos, scarves, shawls, fingerless mitts
 and **SOCKS 'n SOCKS 'n SOCKS !!!!!**


Roses and Daisy design pottery, cushion covers, cards, Xmas gifts galore,
 Jewellery, SA and Western Cape maps, cute kids' T-shirts

SWARTBERG HOTEL STOEP

Open 7 days a week

Renu-karoo Nursery

Prince Albert




- Succulents
- Indigenous plants
- Fruit trees
- Vegetable punnets
- Potting soil
- Natural history books


POLICE

Church Street → N

van Dyk Street ↓



OPEN:
 Weekdays 7.30-17.00
 Saturday 9.00-17.00
 Sunday 9.00-13.00



Tel: 082 770 0206 Email: renukaroo@gmail.com
 www.renu-karoo.co.za
 Visit us on Facebook