

GARDEN TORCH CANDLES

The issue:

Garden torch candles are wax candles, usually long and narrow, with a support stake made of bamboo or wood to insert them into the ground or a bucket of sand. They are used to provide outdoor light and decoration, and some also contain citronella to repel mosquitoes.

The picture on the right is one example of the many types of garden torch candles that are available on the market.

Burn tests conducted by fire service personnel and by Health Canada on several types of garden torch candles showed them to be a **fire risk** to consumers because the candle flame may set fire to the support stake that is embedded in the wax. Sometimes, burning pieces of the support stake break off and set fire to nearby objects. The support stake may also crack, causing the candle to tip over and set fire to the surrounding area. In one case, the flaming wick fell to the ground and continued burning even after the wax had been used up. Hot, dripping and splattering wax and very high flames have also been reported with these types of candles.

All candles present a risk of fire and should always be used with care, keeping fire safety in mind. Garden torch candles with a bamboo or wood stake present an added fire risk because the stake can also catch on fire.

Candle fires can cause serious burn injuries and death, as well as significant property damage.

What you can do:

Health Canada recommends that the following fire safety precautions be taken when burning garden torch candles:

- BURN OUTDOORS ONLY.
- Place a garden torch candle securely in an upright position in soft earth or a bucket of sand, away from anything that can catch on fire such as grass, flowers, shrubs, mulch, overhanging trees and branches, patio furniture, fences, buildings and other structures.

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- Never group garden torch candles. If you use more than one garden torch candle at a time, place them at least one candle length away from each other. Unsafe burning behaviour by even one candle in a group can effect the safe burning of the other candles, with devastating results.
- **Never leave a burning candle unattended.** If you are going to leave the area, first put out all candles.
- Keep burning candles out of the reach of children and pets, and guard against unintentional contact.
- Do not move a candle while it is burning. Always put it out and let the wax cool before moving it.
- Avoid burning a candle in windy conditions.
- Put out a candle immediately if it begins to exhibit any unusual burning behaviour such as a high flame, flaring (intensified flame), crackling, “shooting flames”, etc. This means the candle is not burning properly and is unsafe.
- Use a garden hose or bucket of water to put out a garden torch candle, or smother the flame with a large snuffer, spoon or similar metal utensil. It is safer than blowing it out, which can send sparks and hot wax flying. Then place the candle upside-down in a bucket of water to make sure the wick ember as well as the bamboo or wood under the wax are out completely. Candles that have not been put out completely can go on burning with little smoke and no flame and start a fire.
- Stop using a candle when 50 mm (2 inches) of wax remains.

For further information:

For further information or to report a candle-related fire, injury or complaint, please contact Health Canada’s Consumer Product Safety program at 1-866-662-0666 or CPS-SPC@hc-sc.gc.ca, or visit the Consumer Product Safety (CPS) section of Health Canada’s Web site at www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cps.

