

Alternatives to Pesticides

Although the easiest solution to your weed control problem may seem to be the use of a commercial pesticide, there are many potential problems with this method of control.

Although pesticides should be registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, this in no way should imply they are safe. All pesticides are dangerous by design.

Pesticides are toxic. Exposure for even short periods of time can result in health effects. Further, certain members of the community may have allergies that make them especially susceptible to short-term (acute) toxic effects.

Some of these pesticides have suspected long-term (chronic) health effects. Even scarier is that most of these pesticides have not been available long enough to determine what long term effects they might have.

The use of commercial pesticides is also expensive and non-chemical approaches often are a fraction of the cost.

Pest		Natural Control
Ants, cockroaches (in the house)		Mix equal parts of powdered sugar and powdered borax. Sprinkle in corners and a long baseboards.
Ants (in the garden)		Plant onions around your beans. They repel the ants.
Aphids		Same as for mealy bugs and thrips. Also plant tartiums in the garden. Or, cut up 3 pounds of rhubarb or elder leaves. Boil 1/2 hour in 3 quarts of water. Strain and cool. Dissolve 1oz. Soap in one quart of water. Mix the two solutions and spray.
Asparagus beetles		Marigolds keep them away
Beetles, bugs, caterpillars and other large insects		Pick pests off plants, drop in can of soapy water
Cabbage loopers, carrot flies		Plant one of these insect-repellent plants between rows of cabbage or carrots: sage, rosemary, mint, leeks, hyssop.
Cabbage worms		Plant rosemary, thyme, or hyssop. Cover plants with cheesecloth to keep adult butterfly from laying eggs. Or sprinkle rye flour over and around plants when covered with dew.
Caterpillars		Use "stickum" made from 1 1/2 cups rosin (from athletic supply store), 1 cup linseed oil, 1 tbsp. melted paraffin, mixed together and painted around trunks of trees.
Chinch bugs		Plant soybeans near corn as a trap plant
Codling moths (apple worms)		Hang bright red plastic apples coated with "stickum"
Colorado potato beetles		Plant a few beans near your potatoes. They will attract the beetles
Cucumber Beetle		Plant tansy to repel beetles
Curculios (plum weevils)		Plant horseradish around base of trees to repel them
Cutworms, cabbage loopers, tent caterpillars, gypsy moths		Buy bacillus thuringiensis ("BT") bacterial spray from garden store. Smash egg masses of gypsy moths. Sink paper cups (with bottoms removed around seedlings to block cutworms)
Dahlia bores		Goldenrod planted nearby will attract them
Flea beetles		Plant catnip here and there in border to repel them

Harlequin bugs		Plant radishes, turnips or mustard around your cabbage to attract them
Japanese beetles		To repel them, plant herbs such as garlic, rue or tansy near roses and raspberries. Plant soybeans, zinnias or white rose near other crops to lure beetles away from crops. Buy beetle traps or “milky spore disease” bacteria (“Doom”) from garden store (takes 2 to 3 years)
Maggots		Radishes lure them away from sprouting corn and cabbage
Mealy bugs, thrip, red spider mites, lice		Spray plants with “bubble bath” of soapy water, rinse off after animals are dead. Order from garden store: green lacewing adults and larvae; “defatted: ladybug adults and larvae
Mexican bean beetles		Plant potatoes nearby to lure them away. Or repel them with rosemary and summer savory.
Millipedes, wireworms		Punch holes in sides and bottom of tall juice can. Bury upright in garden border. Fill with carrot or potato peelings. Empty can weekly
Moles, mice		Plant an herb called “mole plant” here and there to repel them
Mosquitos		Drain stagnant water to kill larvae (wigglers), or pour a film of salad oil on surface.
Nematodes		Marigolds give off chemicals which get rid of them. Plant lots in your garden — they’ll look pretty too!
Onion flies		Plant onion “sets”, not onion seeds
Pickleworms		Plant bush squash near cantaloupes and cucumbers. Worms will gather on squash for easy killing
Plant bugs		Plant sunflowers nearby as “traps” to lure away from potatoes. Bugs can easily be picked of sunflowers and dropped into soapy water.
Potato beetles		Plant horseradish or flax to repel them. Or plant eggplants next to potatoes to attract them, then pick them off and drop in soapy water.
Slug, snails		Place cabbage leaf or old board on ground. They will gather underneath during day, to be picked up and dropped into soapy water. Plant onions and marigolds to repel them. Place shallow pans of beer or vinegar, sunk level with the ground. Clean out every day or so. Invite a toad by building it a house
Sowbugs, earwigs		Remove their hiding places — piles of plant material, boards, bricks, large rocks
Squash bugs		Plant tansy to repel them
Tomato worms		Plant asparagus, marigolds or borage near tomatoes to repel them. Dill lures them from tomatoes
Whiteflies (on house-plants)		Hang yellow strips of cardboard coated with “stickup” or buy a “tack trap” at a garden store.

National Pesticide Information Clearinghouse
1-800-858-7378 | npic.orst.edu/

Wisconsin Poison Center | Milwaukee, WI
1-800-222-1222 | www.wisconsinpoison.org

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture
datcp.wi.gov/Plants/Pesticides/index.aspx

Natural Resources Defense Council
(212) 727-2700 | www.nrdc.org/

Beyond Pesticides
202-543-5450 | www.beyondpesticides.org

Wisconsin Institute for Sustainable Agriculture
608-890-0980 | wisa.cals.wisc.edu/

Midwest Center for Environmental Science and Public Policy
Milwaukee, WI 53202
414-271-7280 | www.mcespp.org/

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