

# NATURAL SOLUTIONS FOR PEST PROBLEMS

## **Be Patient with Aphids**

Aphids have so many predators that they rarely become a problem. Something will usually come along to eat them – but only if you wait a little while and don't spray them!

If you do spray -- organic, botanical, or otherwise -- you'll probably kill off or discourage beneficial insects as they arrive. Or, you'll at least cut down the population of the appetizing aphids just long enough so that the predators won't discover your garden. As a result, the aphids that survive the spraying (the strongest ones) will suddenly multiply, and there will be no army of predators ready to handle them. So you'll have to spray and spray again, and the problem will continue.

If a particular crop or specific plants are seriously threatened by aphids while you're waiting for the beneficials to arrive, just spray them hard with a hose once a day until you see your insect allies appear. You'll be glad you waited for reinforcements.

## **Try Orange Defense**

Placing orange peels at the base of the afflicted plants can help. The oil found in citrus peel destroys the aphid's waxy outer coating, causing them to suffocate.

## **“Plant” Toads**

Few things are as good for your garden as a resident toad – or two. You can't exactly *plant* a toad, but you can try to attract them. Toads love pea aphids and a lot of other pest insects; they even eat slugs. So offer toads shelter, such as an inverted clay pot with a “door” chipped out of the lip, and some water. A small sunken pool or even a shallow dish will do fine. Put these near the pea patch and the toads will come. And, when you find a toad around your yard, move him into your garden.

## **Help Birds Hunt Insects**

Birds eat insects – and important source of protein for them and their young – in summer, just when you and your garden need the help. Make their hunting easier by providing perches at high points around your garden. Tall tomato cages provide perches but the birds will find your garden more attractive if there is at least one stake that is 1 to 2 feet higher than the tops of the cages. Put a short crosspiece atop each tall “perching” stake where birds can rest while they scan for insects.

## **DIY Insect Spray**

This all-purpose bug control combines the repellent effects of garlic, onion, and hot pepper with the insecticidal properties of soap. Keep in mind that sprays that contain soap may harm natural enemies and pollinating insects. Apply it only to prevent or ease a specific pest problem.

### *That You'll Need*

1 garlic bulb  
1 small onion  
Food processor or blender  
1 teaspoon cayenne  
1 quart water  
Cheesecloth  
1 tablespoon liquid dish soap  
Pump spray bottle

### *Directions:*

1. Chop, grind, or puree the garlic and onion in a food processor or blender. Add the cayenne and mix with the water.
2. Steep 1 hour, strain through the cheesecloth, and add the soap. Mix well and pour into the spray bottle.
3. Spray plants thoroughly, including the undersides of the leaves. Store the mixture for up to a week in a labeled, covered container in the refrigerator.

### **Paralyzing Pest Salsa**

Paralyze pests with salsa that's only a little stronger than you might eat on your chips. Crushed garlic contains allicin, the smelling compound that confounds the sensory receptors of insects in search of a tasty plant feast. Hot peppers are loaded with fiery capsaicin, which gives a chemical burn to marauding mammals and some soft-bodied insects. Onion gives the salsa an extra aromatic kick and contains sulfur, which may suppress some fungal diseases. Many pests avoid tomatoes, so the unmistakable tomato odor signals them to look elsewhere.

### *What You'll Need*

2 pounds ripe, blemished tomatoes  
1 pound fresh chile peppers  
1 large onion  
2 cloves garlic

Food processor or blender  
1 cup vinegar  
½ teaspoon ground black pepper  
Cheesecloth or coffee filter  
Pump spray bottle

*Directions:*

1. Roughly chop the tomatoes, peppers, onion, and garlic.
2. Place the chopped vegetables in a food processor or blender and puree until liquefied. Add the vinegar.
3. Strain the mixture through several layers of cheesecloth or a disposable coffee filter.
4. Pour the liquid into the spray bottle.
5. Spray the liquid directly on pests that you spot in your garden.

NOTE: This salsa can be highly irritating if it gets in your eyes or mouth, so use caution and spray only on a windless day.

### **Sheer Protection from Cabbageworms**

Row covers are a great way to protect members of the cabbage family, including broccoli and cauliflower, from imported cabbageworms and cabbage loopers. But row covers aren't practical if your garden is interplanted with flowers you would like to enjoy, or if you don't plant in rows.

You can still protect your cabbage and broccoli, though, with their own personal covers made from nylon knee-highs or the legs of panty hose. Put the stockings right over each individual vegetable, and they will stretch as the cabbages or heads of broccoli grow. Avoid using parts that are torn or holey.

### **Make Them Walk on Eggshells**

If you've got a slug or snail problem, scattering crushed eggshells around the base of your plants may help keep these pests away since slimy critters don't like crawling over the sharp pieces. You can also use red cedar shavings (the kind used for hamster litter) since slugs and snails will not want to crawl over the cedar.

### **Battle Slugs with Big Leaves**

Here's a simple way to get slugs out of your garden without hand-picking. All you need are some big-leaved veggies, such as cabbage or kale, growing in your beds. Trim off a few leaves and lay them on top of the soil. The slugs will visit the leaves – and not your vegetables – for a meal, and they'll hide beneath the leaves when the sun comes up. Gather

the leaves and dunk them in soapy water to get rid of the slugs. Or lay the leaves – slug side up – where hungry birds can snatch up the slugs.

### **Create a Slug Saloon**

Pour beer into Frisbees or a quart jar lid and then set them in your garden to trap and drown marauding slugs.

### **Watch Beetles Drop**

Every Japanese beetle you catch early is one that can't lay eggs to make more. So during the start of the season set your alarm clock early – before 7 AM – to get out there and get the beetles.

Spread a sheet under the plants the beetles prefer. Some say roses suffer most, but there are hundreds of target plants – everything from grapevines to fruit trees. Then shake the plant or whack it with a broom and watch the beetles fall down and “play dead”. Toss them into soapy water or vinegar.

### **Foil Cutworms**

To prevent cutworm damages, place a toothpick next to each transplant's stem, with 1 inch stuck into the soil and 1 inch above the ground. Because of the toothpick, the cutworm cannot completely circle the plant stem and cut it off at soil level.

You can also guard plants from cutworms with a collar. Cut a piece of aluminum foil about 6 inches square and then crumple it slightly. Tear the foil from the middle of one side to the center of the square. Slip the plant stem through that opening and pinch the foil closed around the stem, forming something like a mini tree guard. Be sure that the foil covers the stem and reaches down into the soil just a little bit.

### **Protect Tomato Seedlings**

Keep cutworms from damaging your tomatoes and support the plants at the same time with pieces of 4inc diameter PVC pipe cut into 12 – 14 inch lengths. After you plant the seedlings, carefully put a piece of PVC pipe over the top of each one and push it into the ground. You can leave the PVC on all growing season.