

# Gardening Department

## Organic Pest Solutions

More and more we are all becoming aware of our footprint in the world. Most of us are acutely aware of the chemicals we use in and around the home. People are looking for answers to their gardening problems that are safe for people and pets, as well as safe for the environment.

There are some things we can do to control insects without spraying, such as physically pulling caterpillars or beetles off plants and drowning them in a bucket of water. Or such as using natural insect predators such as ladybugs for aphids. These methods aren't always easy or totally effective. In these cases you may have to use an organic spray product.

For control of caterpillars on trees, shrubs, vegetables and flowers, BT is a beneficial microbe that is a parasite to caterpillars. This can be mixed into water and sprayed on your plants. It's best to spray in early morning before the sun is too hot.

Neem oil is a natural oil from the nut of a tree found in India. Neem oil can be used as both an insecticide and a fungicide. Neem oil is a useful repellent for mites, and used to manage a wide range of chewing and sucking insects. Neem oil can be purchased as a concentrate, in ready-to-use bottles such as Bonide Rose Rx 3-in-1 Spray, or Azaguard, a do-it-yourself bottle with concentrate.

Neem oil should be sprayed in early morning or early evening, never in severely hot weather. You will need to do multiple sprayings. Neem oil is safe for people, pets, fish and also safe for most insects like butterflies.

A similar product is Bonide All Season Spray Oil, a highly refined mineral oil that is safe for your plants if used in a similar fashion to Neem oil.

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### Organic Pest Solutions (Continued)

Diatomaceous earth (DE) is the remains of small sea creatures and is entirely made of silica, the most abundant mineral on earth. When insects come in contact it cuts their exoskeleton, dehydrating them.

To spread DE around the house, a flour sifter can be used. A turkey baster can be used to apply DE in cracks and along window sills, etc., inside or outside the home. You can put DE in a sprayer at a ratio of four tablespoons of DE per gallon of water. This mixture can be sprayed on all of your plants and trees to control most types of insects.

Diatomaceous earth is so safe, it is used in soaps and cosmetics.

