

Healthy Living Strategy: Lawn Care

Pest Control Strategies For Your Lawn & Garden

Weed Control

Natural weed control involves some hand weeding while your lawn gathers strength. By focusing on soil health, your lawn gets thicker, stronger and more weed resistant. Chemical weed control simply treats the symptoms and not the cause of the problem, which means that it is a short-term solution and will continually be needed to keep weeds under control.



Hand digging is one of the most effective methods of weed control. You should pick or dig out weeds, preferably before they seed, and try to remove as much of their roots as you can. It is also a good idea to learn to tolerate some weeds in your yard. Over time, a healthy organic lawn will crowd out most weeds and prevent them from becoming a problem.

Herbicidal soaps are non-selective herbicides that destroy most weeds. Spray selectively, only on problem plants, to avoid damaging desirable plants and disrupting soil microbes.



Full strength vinegar may be sprayed on broad-leaf weeds. Commercial preparations combined with lemon are available (the lemon scent will act as a natural insect repellent). However, vinegar is highly acidic and will negatively affect the soil micro-organism population and other plants around the area where it is applied.



Corn gluten meal is an animal feed that has been found to stop root development as seeds germinate. It can be used in lawns and gardens to prevent weeds from starting, but it should not be applied when you are seeding your lawn or garden. Garden centres carry a pelletized form that is easy to spread.



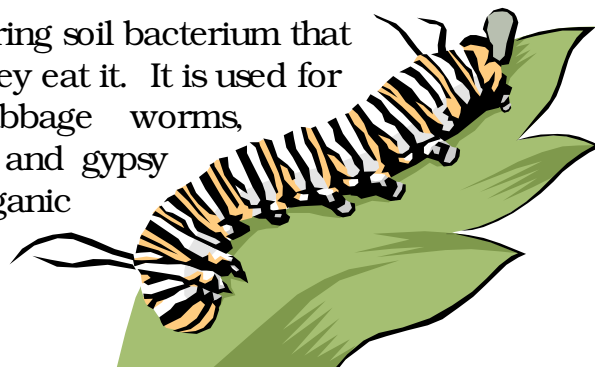
Insect Control

In a healthy lawn, beneficial insects can keep pest insects from becoming a problem.

Insecticidal soap can be found in garden centres and will control both insects and some fungi. The soap clogs insect breathing pores and is effective against many insects and mites, including aphids, thrips, white flies and spider mites, as well as powdery mildew fungus. The soap must contact the pest to be effective.

You can make your own soap by dissolving 1 part dishwashing liquid in 40-80 parts water. Spray infected plants, covering under-sides of leaves, and rinse off after 15 minutes to avoid damage to foliage. For severe infestations, repeat three times during 10 days to treat successive generations.

Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt) is a naturally occurring soil bacterium that infects and kills all species of caterpillars when they eat it. It is used for many garden pest problems including cabbage worms, cutworms, tomato hornworm, tent caterpillars, and gypsy moth. Bt can be found in garden centres as “organic garden spray”, and should be used sparingly by applying it only to the plants that need to be protected.



Nematodes are tiny worm-like parasites of insects, plants or animals. Certain species are effective against lawn and soil pests such as white grubs, and can be found in garden centres. Nematodes live inside their hosts but die when they dry out in the soil, so it is important to keep the soil moist when working with them.

Borax or boric acid kills cockroaches, ants, earwigs, fleas, silver fish and other insects when they eat it. It can be found in grocery, drug, and gardening stores as either an odourless, non-staining powder or in solution. Sprinkle it in dry places around your house and garden, but if using the powder, be careful not to inhale any dust.

Diatomaceous earth is a naturally occurring substance comprised of razor-sharp fossilized remains. It works by scratching the waxy coating that normally prevents insects from losing water, causing them to die from dehydration. Diatomaceous earth can be found in garden centres and should have a high content of amorphous silica. To use, sprinkle it in the garden where high numbers of insects are found, and take care not to inhale any of the powder. Be selective when you apply diatomaceous earth as it will affect both beneficial and undesirable insects.

