

ORGANIC METHODS TO CONTROL PEST IN YOUR GARDEN



We all know that pest control is an important aspect of gardening. Chemical pest control involves the use of chemicals, that can be detrimental to human health, beneficial insects, and other organisms. Long-term use of most of the chemical pesticides may harm the ecosystem as a whole. In this scenario, the concept of organic farming is getting popular. It is a concept of growing crops without using synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. So, in organic gardening, pest control involves natural methods. Let us take a look at the various measures employed, so as to control pests, according to the concept of organic gardening.

Preventive Measures

Organic pest control measures can be of different types. To start with, organic gardening aims at preventing the entry of pests. This is achieved by removing weeds completely, before planting. The soil is prepared with lots of organic matter and mulch, so that the plants grow healthy and strong.

It is said that seaweed mulching is good for making plants resistant to diseases. The infected and weak plants are removed and destroyed at the very beginning. Removal of weeds and debris at regular intervals is a golden rule for preventing pests.

As wet foliage can attract some pests, it is always better to water the plants early in the morning, so that there is no moisture on them by night. Though these preventive measures are found to be beneficial, we cannot rule out the chances of pest attacks. So, organic pesticides are used for getting rid of pests.

Organic Pest Control

Predatory Insects: In case of organic gardening, biological pest control is one of the preferred methods. The most common biological pest control measure is use of predatory insects, that feed on pests. You may either buy them from garden stores, or attract them to your garden by growing certain plants. For example, ladybugs can control aphids, mites, and scales; and they can be attracted to your garden by planting daisies, yarrow, and tansy. Other predatory insects include certain types of wasps, lacewings, praying mantis, and hoverflies.

Beneficial Nematodes: Nematodes are roundworms that are said to be among the most diverse animals on the Earth. Some of these microscopic worms are found to be parasitic for humans, animals, and plants. Those parasitic to insects are made use of in organic gardening. Such nematodes can be bought from garden centers. They are available in the form of powder that has to be mixed with water, and sprayed on the soil. These nematodes carry a specific type of bacteria (*Xenorhabdus* bacteria), in their intestine and larynx. Once the nematodes enter the body of the host insects or larvae (like grub worms), the bacteria are released. The bacteria break down the internal organs of the hosts, thereby killing them.

Cultural Methods: These methods involve removal of pests as well as the affected plants manually. Some people resort to crop rotation, so as to prevent pest attacks. Planting different crops year after year, reduces the chances of pest attacks. Another method is to grow plants other than the crops, so as to deter the pests. Some plants can ward off specific pests. For example, catnip, marigold, garlic, and tansy, are found to deter potato bugs. Some plants are grown as trap crops, along with the actual crops. The trap plants are those, which are relished by pests; and once the pests gather and feed on the trap plants, the plants are removed and destroyed.

You may also prepare some homemade pesticides for controlling pests. A solution of garlic powder in water is found effective against a wide range of pests. Hot chili peppers are also effective for controlling pests. Take two cups of water, and mix it with a paste made of half a cup of chopped chili peppers. Allow it to sit for a day. Strain the mixture and combine with two tablespoons of dish soap (without bleach). This solution is said to be excellent for controlling bugs. You must gain a thorough knowledge about the specific pest control method relevant for your crop, beforehand. It will be better to contact a horticulturist, who can guide you in this task.