

# **SAFE ORGANIC GARDENING**



## Getting the Right Balance Between Pest Control and Nature

The five methods to pest control in an organic garden are highlighted and discussed here; these being the main weapons of pest control when battling with the creatures of nature for organically safe pest control ways to maintain a healthy and naturally balanced organic garden in a controlled and balanced way by working with nature and not upsetting the natural eco system .

### 1. Wildlife Pond

To Encourage Natural Predators of Pests

Working with Nature to Create an Eco System

This is the first line of defence, working with nature to build up and maintain an eco-system that encourages and benefits wildlife, and in return the natural wildlife helps to control my garden of unwanted pests..

The sort of wildlife attracting to the pond include toads, frogs and newts as its inhabitants; and birds, hedgehogs and foxes as friendly visitors to the garden, encouraged by the pond as a fresh water source.

Admittedly some species of birds may be more interested in your vegetable crops than the pests on them

Some may wonder what benefit urban foxes are to the organic gardener, but what most people may not know is that invertebrates (including slugs and snails) is an important part of the foxes diet. Studies have shown that invertebrates is over 15% of the urban foxes diet in Bristol and more than 20% of their diet in London.

## .2. Washing up Liquid

### A Traditional Organic Pest Control

An age old remedy for the organic gardener

Yes, a squirt of washing up liquid in some water (soapy water) is an age old remedy used by organic gardeners to control black fly for eons. It's simple, quick, cheap and effective; and above all not harmful to animals or humans.

When used, soapy water works almost immediately and is almost 100% effective; and is a pest control that has been advocated by most organic gardeners for eons.

## 3. Diatomaceous Earth Powder

### Totally Safe To Humans and All Other Animals

### A Less Well Known and Underused Pest Control

For controlling the red mite spider organically, the most suitable and most promising organic control for red mite spider was Diatomaceous

earth, particularly as it is totally harmless to animals and humans, even if swallowed or breathed; in fact it's a common oral remedy for controlling worms in domestic pet cats and dogs.

The only drawback in using it in powder form for insect control in gardens is it is ineffective in wet or damp conditions. It must be applied on a calm dry sunny day when there is little chance of rain, then (as I discovered) it is a very effective control of insect pests.

Diatomaceous earth is a sedimentary rock made up of the fossilized remains of diatoms. Diatoms are a common form of algae that makes up a significant part of plankton that's at the root of the food chain in the sea. Diatoms outer cell is made from silica (aka Silicon) which has many industrial and manufacturing uses including the production of silicon chips for computers, and as we all know, the material used to make glass. Diatomaceous earth is a soft white to off-white rock that crumbles easily into a fine powder, which although harmless to animals and humans is deadly to insects.

Diatomaceous earth has many industrial uses which includes filtration, as a mild abrasive, insecticide, absorbent for liquids, a matting agent for paint, to reinforce plastics and rubbers, and as anti-block in plastic films, as a chemical catalyst, a stabilizing compound in dynamite, an activator in blood clotting, as cat litter and because of its heat-resistance sometimes used as a thermal insulator.

The way Diatomaceous earth works in powder form as a pest control is that it is so effective at absorbing moisture that on contact it dehydrates the insect by absorbing moisture from the insect's exoskeleton; hence why it's only effective during dry conditions.

## How Much Diatomaceous Earth Powder Do You Need?

Diatomaceous Earth Powder is a natural product that's very versatile in its use in the home and garden as an effective pest control that's totally safe to wildlife, animals and humans. It's only drawback being that it doesn't work in wet conditions.

Obviously buying in bulk is cheaper but if you only want it to control a few pests in the home or for treating your pets then you'll not need a great deal and you'll only want it in a convenient shaker.

Whereas if you want to also use it for pests in your garden then you'll need a much larger bag, most probably 5lbs. or for a very large garden maybe 10lb.

## 4. Companion Planting

Working With Nature to Control Pests

Give Your Little Helpers a Helping Hand

Companion planting is a big subject, too big to discuss here in any great detail. However, in brief, companion planting does serve two main purposes:-

It can help in camouflaging your crops from predators, and

Provide a safe haven for your little friends such as ladybirds (known as ladybugs in America).

If you plant your crops in long straight rows with nothing else around them then they are easy prey for the insects and birds alike that have a fondness for that particular vegetable. As different insects have different tastes e.g. aphids will target your beans and white butterflies your cabbages and other brassicas if these vegetables are shrouded by other plants that the pests are not attracted to then your crops become more difficult for them to detect from the air. Subsequently, any attacks are

likely to be of shorter in duration and less severe and therefore easier for you to control by other means, including soapy water as a last line of defence.

Some insects find their target by sight and some by scent, either way companion plants help to hide your vegetables visually and by adding their own odours to the air making detection of your crops more difficult by hungry bugs looking for a tasty feeding and breeding ground.

Encouraging native wild flowers such as poppies to grow near your crop will attract aphids to these wild flowers and in turn ladybirds; giving ladybirds somewhere to feed and breed and be ready when needed to help defend your crops.

Marigolds is also a very popular companion plant in the organic vegetable garden as their scent is known to deter (or confuse) some insects. Pot Marigolds (picture above) in particular is a good choice as they are also edible e.g. the petals make an ideal top decorative dressing for salads.