

A close-up photograph of a bumblebee with a black and orange thorax and a white and black abdomen, perched on a vibrant purple flower. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting a natural outdoor setting. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

Best of

**New England's
Natural Solutions
to Nature's Nuisances**

New England
GUIDES

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Fleas

How to Get Rid of Fleas on Pets | Natural and Herbal Remedies

Wondering how to get rid of fleas on your cat or dog? Fleas have always been a nuisance to pets and pet owners. When you need to send fleas fleeing from your dog or your cat, fight back with these timeless tips.



Photo by Aimee Seavey

Lemon and garlic are two good places to start when wondering how to get rid of fleas on your pets.

HOW TO GET RID OF FLEAS WITH GARLIC

Even as a kid, Roger Valentine, D.V.M., now a veterinarian in Santa Monica, California, relied on a fresh clove of garlic a day to make his dog less appetizing to fleas. Now, with his holistic training, Dr. Valentine understands more about the powers of garlic. “Will garlic keep fleas off a dog — or cat? No, but it can make them less appealing,” says Dr. Valentine. For chowhounds that gobble up anything, you can just crush the clove and stick it in the food bowl with their meal. For picky eaters, you may need to opt for sprinkling a teaspoon of garlic powder into the dry food and adding some water for gravy.

HOW TO GET RID OF FLEAS WITH LEMON

Some homemakers in the late 1800s demonstrated the value of lemon in keeping a fresh-smelling house by reaching for a lemon and squeezing the juice for use in cleaning their sinks, according to the *The Household Guide or Domestic Cyclopedia* (1892) by Benjamin Jefferis, M.D., and James Nichols. Turns out that lemons have a repellent effect on fleas and other pests, too. Lemon contains d-limonene, a natural flea-killing substance. Holistic-minded animal herbalists have relied on lemon skin tonic to keep fleas from feasting on their Fidos.

MAKE LEMON SKIN TONIC TO PREVENT FLEAS

To make some, thinly slice a whole lemon, including the peel. Add it to 1 pint of near-boiling water and let it steep overnight. The next day, sponge the cooled liquid onto your dog's skin and let dry. Use this homemade tonic daily for a few days to combat fleas. Say goodbye to your pooch's scratching!

Another option for fighting fleas is to wash your dog with a pet shampoos that contain d-limonene, a natural extract from citrus fruits that will kill fleas with minimal side effects on dogs. Just be sure not to use this ingredient on cats, because it can be toxic to them.

HOW TO GET RID OF FLEAS WITH HOMEMADE SHAMPOO

Make a Homemade Flea Shampoo for Pets

“You can make old-fashioned insect-repellent shampoo simply by adding a few drops of essential oil of rosemary, pennyroyal, or eucalyptus to a bottle of natural pet shampoo,” says Richard Pitcairn, D.V.M., Ph.D., a holistic-minded veterinarian in practice for more than 45 years. Dr. Pitcairn cautions pet owners to be careful not to apply these oils directly to a dog's skin, because the oils can be too irritating and may cause rashes.

HOW TO GET RID OF FLEAS ON DOGS

Make a Homemade Flea Herbal Rinse for Pets

Since Colonial times, people have looked to their herb gardens for all kinds of remedies for common ailments. Picking the right herbs to grow can also keep your pets from scratching up a fuss when summer arrived and the fleas are thriving. Here's an easy herbal recipe to fight dog fleas. In a saucepan, bring 1 pint of water to a boil. Add 1 teaspoon dried rosemary or 1 tablespoon fresh rosemary leaves, cover, and steep for 10 minutes. Strain out the herbs and allow the rosemary “tea” to cool to room temperature. Pour this mixture over your dog after her final bath rinse. Rub in and towel dry without further rinsing. This herbal flea shampoo will work on cat fleas as well as dog fleas.

HOW TO GET RID OF FLEAS ON CATS

Even indoor cats are not immune to flea visitors. Pet-friendly herbalists recommend this natural way to discourage fleas from setting up house in your cat's coat.

Make a Homemade Herbal Flea Powder for Cats

Combine one part each of as many of these herbs as you can find: eucalyptus, rosemary, fennel, yellow dock, wormwood, and rue. Put this mixture in a shaker-top jar (like the one you use for parsley flakes). Apply the herbal flea powder sparingly to your cat's coat by brushing backward with your hand or a comb and sprinkling the herbs into the base of the hairs, especially around the neck, back, and belly. Do this several times a week. Your cat will purr with gratitude. (It won't harm your cat to ingest the powder, so don't be concerned if she licks herself after you apply it.)

Ticks

Lyme Disease Prevention | Protect Yourself from Ticks

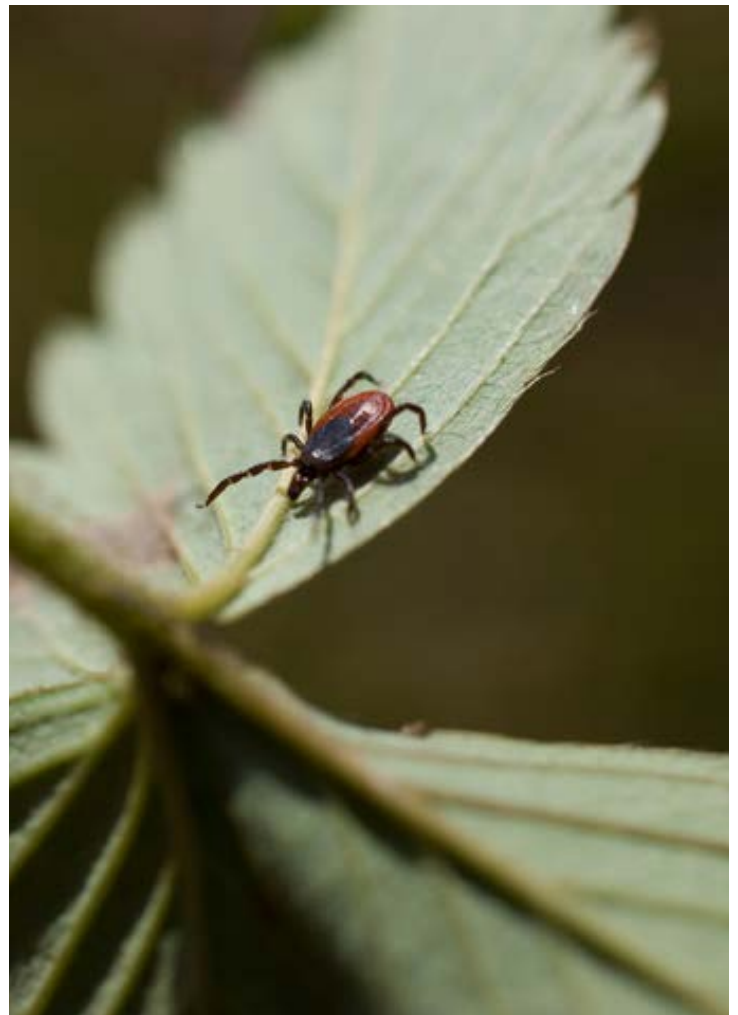
Protecting yourself from ticks is the first step in Lyme disease prevention. Follow these tips to prevent them from latching on to you.

1. Wear light-colored long pants and a long-sleeved shirt when walking through woods, tall grass, ground cover, or beach areas. For even better protection, tuck your pants into your socks and your shirt into your pants.
2. Consider using an EPA-approved tick repellent. (Wash it off at home after your outing.) Special outdoor clothing lines pretreated with permethrin are now available.
3. Check your skin (even covered areas) for ticks after an outing.
4. Promptly remove any ticks you find. Wear gloves and use a tick puller or fine-point precision tweezers. Grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible, pull it straight out (don't crush it or puncture it), and dispose of it in a vial of rubbing alcohol. Swab the bite and your tool with antiseptic.
5. Consult your physician immediately if you experience any of the following symptoms: bull's-eye or expanding solid rash, swollen or painful joints, swollen glands, headache, fever, chills, sore throat, stiff neck, numbness or tingling in arms or legs, abnormal vision, abnormal pulse, facial paralysis, or severe fatigue.

Ticks | Protect Your Pet from Lyme Disease

When the weather warms, tick season launches into full swing. You want to protect your furry friends, but first you need to know where those nasty critters are lying in wait, ready to pounce on their next meal ticket. Tall grass, bushes, and trees are all potential hidey-holes for ticks. As your pet passes by, they drop from their perch and burrow into Fido's fur. Here are five tips to protect your pet from Lyme disease.

1. Brush pets after outings and inspect them for ticks, especially if they've been running in woods, brush, or tall grass. Keep the grass mowed in areas where your pets play. If you use any type of pesticide in your yard, make sure it's approved for use around pets.
2. Promptly remove any ticks you find. Wear gloves and use a tick puller or fine-point precision tweezers. Grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible, pull it straight out (don't crush it or puncture it), and dispose of it in a vial of rubbing alcohol. Swab the bite and your tool with antiseptic.
3. Wash your pet's bedding and vacuum your home regularly. If you use an indoor parasiticide, make sure it's approved for use around pets.
4. Talk to your veterinarian about the benefits and risks of the canine Lyme vaccine and ask wheth-



er it's appropriate for your dog. Ask whether a topical tick repellent or parasiticide, whether prescription or over-the-counter, is also appropriate for your pet.

5. Consult your veterinarian immediately if you see any of the following signs in your pet: swollen joints, lameness, lethargy, fever, or low appetite. Antibiotic therapy is highly successful in animals, but if left untreated, Lyme disease may cause arthritis, heart disorders, neurological impairment (resulting in confusion or aggression), or severe (and potentially fatal) kidney disease.

Landscaping for Tick Control

These key landscaping tips for tick control come from Connecticut's Agricultural Experiment Station in New Haven.

Your primary goal is to manage tick and host habitats (including prime rodent nesting spots and hideouts) within the part of your property that your family members use most often. To do that, you're going to create a "safe zone" around your house: You'll learn how to use your yard as a barrier between the woods and your home, isolating family areas from tick "hot spots."

1. Keep it clean, bright, and sunny. Prune trees and shrubs, mow your lawns regularly, and rake in the fall. Stack your wood well away from your house. Clear away weeds, brush, and leaf litter, especially around stonewalls and woodpiles and along lawn and driveway edges. Mulch under foundation plantings. Clear away fruits and produce that have fallen under trees and crop plants.
2. Design your outdoor-living area. Use quality bark or wood chips, mulch, or gravel to create a minimum 3-foot-wide border between woods and lawn. Then add a patio or deck, plus gravel, stone, tile, brick, or concrete pathways near your house and around your yard.
3. Cut your kids' risk. Move swings and play equipment away from wooded or brushy areas at the edges of your property. Move them into a mown area closer to your house and install wood-chip or mulch foundations under them.
4. Plan before you plant. Get rid of tick-friendly ground covers such as pachysandra and myrtle in the family areas of your property. Plant wildflower meadows, herb or vegetable gardens, drought-resistant species, and native deer-resistant varieties instead. (Consult your local garden center for suggestions.) Consider installing a deer fence around your gardens — or your entire property — to discourage four-hoofed dinner guests. (Consult your town government regarding local regulations or permits.)
5. Keep the critters out. Seal openings around your house and foundation to discourage mice and chipmunks from moving in with you.

Bees and Wasps

Treat Bee Stings and Other Bug Bites

One of the downsides to summer, bee stings can be pretty painful annoyances. And there are plenty of other flying attackers ready to zap you when you step outdoors in the summer, too. “The stinging insects that can cause reactions are the honeybee, the bumblebee, the yellow jacket, the yellow hornet, the white-faced hornet, and any of several varieties of wasp,” says Wilfred Beaucher, M.D., an internist, allergist, and immunologist in Chelmsford, Massachusetts, and Nashua, New Hampshire. The honeybee—a brownish, hairy creature—usually loses its stinger when it gets you. The other stinging insects, which have stingers that they can withdraw from your flesh, can attack repeatedly.

We failed to mention the killer bee, didn't we? Actually, killer bees are a breed of African honeybees that have interbred with American varieties to form an unusually aggressive insect. Africanized bees defend their nests zealously, and people who come too close occasionally get multiple stings. The bees are widespread in Arizona and Texas and have entered California. The best protection from their sting is to stay away from bees' nests in general, doctors say. If you have been stung and the reaction hasn't spread to the rest of your body, here's what you can do to relieve the pain and itching.

REMOVE THE BEE'S STINGER

The first thing you should do after you've been stung by a bee is try to extract the stinger and venom sac, says Edward Kent, M.D., a pediatric allergist with Timberlane Allergy and Asthma Associates in South Burlington,



Photo by Aimee Seavey
Bees are pollinators, with round, furry bodies.

Vermont. “The venom sac looks like a tiny bag,” Dr. Kent says. “If the bag is in place, you probably have a honey-bee sting. Don’t squeeze or smash it—you could end up injecting more poison into yourself. Instead, take a credit card and flick the sac away with a light scraping motion.”

CHILL OUT

“Once you’ve made sure the stinger is out and the area is clean, put an ice cube directly on the sting for a few minutes,” says Ronald Lentz, M.D., medical director of the Block Island Medical Center in Rhode Island.

SOOTHE THE STING

“Take an antihistamine such as diphenhydramine—the active ingredient in Benadryl—to reduce the itching and swelling of a bee sting,” Dr. Kent says. Diphenhydramine is available over the counter at drugstores.

ADD AMMONIA

Here’s an old-time bee sting remedy: ammonia. Ammonia is alkaline, making it counteract the acidic toxins in insect venom. “It works,” Dr. Beaucher says.

DON’T BE ATTRACTIVE TO BEES

How do you avoid a repeat performance? “If you are going to be outside where bees are, wear non-floral-print clothing,” Dr. Beaucher says. “Bees are attracted to flowers. They’re also attracted to pictures of flowers.” Avoid wearing such flower-like colors as yellow, red, orange, and green. “Pink, blue, and white are good to wear,” he says. “Bees don’t like those colors.”

Be careful not to smell too nice, either. “Don’t wear perfume or scented products like hair spray,” Dr. Beaucher says.

LAST DITCH EFFORT

If no other treatment is available for bee stings, one of the simplest old-time treatments is a handful of mud. Just scoop up the mud and hold it on the sting until the mud dries.

What’s the Difference Between Bees and Wasps?

Bees and wasps may sometimes look alike, but there’s a lot that separates these two common summer insects. Learn the basic difference between bees and wasps, plus what to do if you get stung.

Ahh, summer in New England. The salty ocean air, the cool mountain breezes, the smell of hot dogs and hamburgers on the grill, and (alas) the occasional insect sting. But was it a bee or a wasp that just buzzed on by? Let’s find out the difference between bees and wasps, plus how to treat a bee or wasp sting.

BEE FACTS

Bees (such as bumble bees and honeybees) have hairy, almost “chubby” black and yellow bodies, with flat rear legs. As pollinators, bees focus on flitting from one plant or flower to another, gathering and distributing pollen. Their hairy physique and flat legs are perfect for this task, holding the pollen in place as they move about.

Bees feed nectar and pollen to their babies, meaning they are not predatory hunters, and are not known for their aggression.

WASP FACTS

Wasps (yellow jackets and hornets are members of the wasp family) are also commonly black and yellow, but their slender, smooth bodies give them a more armored appearance than their chubby insect cousins. Wasps

have round legs rather than flat, and rather than serving as pollinators, wasps are primarily predators, hunting things like flies and caterpillars.

Another difference between bees and wasps is that, as predators, wasps can be more easily provoked, earning them a reputation as the more aggressive species.

Pitted against bees, which produce honey and help pollinate the planet, wasps have a tough time in the PR department. Most often, they're cast in the villain role, darting around and stinging while the happy, fat bee busily makes honey.

Now, let's get to the really nasty bit...a bit where there's not much difference between bees and wasps...the stings.

BEE AND WASP STING FACTS

Both bees and wasps have the power to inject venom with a stinger attached to the rear of their bodies. You often hear that a bee or wasp dies after it stings you, but that's really only true for honeybees, which have a barbed stinger that lodges in your skin. When the honeybee flies away after stinging a person, it leaves its stinger behind, which makes it understandably difficult to survive. Wasps and other bees do not lose their stinger in human skin, and (unless you're quick with a rolled up newspaper), will live to sting another day.

If you've been stung by a bee or wasp, there are many folk remedies that claim to bring relief, but scientists say your best bet is to cleanly remove the stinger (if you don't it will continue to pump venom), and then apply anything cooling or numbing to the skin. Of course, if you're allergic or if an allergic reaction begins to take place, call 911 immediately.

As a general rule, it's also wise to move away from an area where you or someone else has been stung, since both bees and wasps send out a signal after they sting, which may encourage more misfortune.



Wasps are predators, with sleek, slender bodies.

Poison Ivy and Poison Oak

Poison Ivy and Oak Treatment

Poison ivy and oak are members of a plant family that includes poison wood (an itch-causing plant found in Florida) and poison sumac, according to W. Hardy Eshbaugh, Ph.D., a retired botanist in Oxford, Ohio. “Some other members of the same plant family can cause a rash in some people,” Dr. Eshbaugh says. “The skin of a mango can be irritating to sensitive skin. And Chinese lacquerware boxes can cause a poison-ivy-like rash.” When the itchy rash sets in, you want to know how to treat poison ivy and oak fast. But it’s also important to understand the cause and how to prevent it.

“You can get the same kind of dermatitis from the shells of raw cashews,” notes Kathryn A. Zug, M.D., a dermatologist at the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, New Hampshire.

The culprit in all these plants is a potent chemical called urushiol. Seven out of 10 people are allergic to it, you can get a rash from just one-billionth gram of the stuff, and it remains potent on garden tools and other surfaces for up to five years. No wonder urushiol is the champion of all allergens—the cause of more allergies than any other known substance.

You needn’t stay out of the fields and woods, though. Here are some remedies to help you cure poison ivy and oak.

GET THE POISON OFF FAST

“The best treatment for poison ivy or oak is to wash with soap in the shower within 5 to 15 minutes of exposure to the plant,” Dr. Zug says. In other words, you need to wash off the urushiol long before you see a rash. This is possible, of course, only if you realize your mistake while you’re in the woods. Rubbing alcohol also might work. “Rubbing alcohol is a solvent that, in order to be effective, must be applied and washed off with a washcloth soon after contact with the plant,” Dr. Zug says.

PUT YOURSELF IN THE PINK

“Calamine lotion is still one of the best treatments for moderate cases of poison ivy,” says Robert Averill, M.D., a dermatologist in western Massachusetts and northern New Hampshire.

“It’s the classic treatment for poison ivy,” Dr. Zug agrees. “Calamine dries up blisters, it is soothing and cooling, and it relieves the itch.”

VINEGAR WORKS, TOO

A vinegar compress is good for drying the rash and soothing the itching, says Robert Sommer, M.D., a dermatologist in Portland, Maine. “Use half a cup of white vinegar. Pour it into a pint container and add water up to the pint mark. Put it in the refrigerator; it works best cold.” Dampen a cloth or gauze with the cold vinegar solution and apply it to the rash, Dr. Sommer says.

USE MILK TO SHAKE THE ITCH

Dr. Sommer also recommends a cold milk compress, especially if you have poison ivy on your face, which can be irritated by vinegar. “You take a clean rag and soak it in whole milk. You need whole milk for the fat,” he says. “Place the damp rag—damp, not runny—on the rash. Leave it on for 10 to 15 minutes. The cold stops the itch, while the fat lubricates the skin.” Dr. Sommer says to rinse off the milk with warm water.

LISTEN TO THE CAMP NURSE

“When the kids get poison ivy, I make a mixture of Domeboro and water and apply it to the rash with gauze pads,” reports Tricia Barr, R.N., a nurse at Camp Walt Whitman in Pike, New Hampshire. Domeboro is an over-the-counter astringent that comes in tablet or powder form. “It’s a good drying agent,” Barr says.

THIS WEED IS A JEWEL

Corinne Martin, a certified clinical herbalist in Bridgton, Maine, likes to use jewelweed to soothe a poison ivy rash. A common plant found throughout the Northeast, jewelweed has a watery stem that contains juice good for stopping the itch. You can collect it in meadows during late summer. “Just crush the stems in your hands and rub the juice right on the rash,” Martin says. She notes that Euell Gibbons, the famous natural food and remedy author, would process jewelweed stems and water in a blender and freeze the mixture in ice cube trays. “Jewelweed ice cubes are great against an itch because of the combination of the jewelweed and the cold,” Martin says.

USE THE OCEAN AS A LOTION

Peter Brassard, M.D., a family doctor on Block Island, Rhode Island, says that a good sea bath can work. “Just the act of wading in the ocean will wash your sores,” he says. “And the salt water will help dry them out.”

MAKE YOUR OWN SALTY SEA

“Epsom salts dry things out,” Dr. Zug says. “They are especially good for poison ivy and other oozy dermatitis. Just follow the directions on the box and sprinkle some into a lukewarm bath.” You can get Epsom salts at your pharmacy or supermarket.

FEEL YOUR OATS

“If you have itchy skin, try taking an oatmeal bath,” says Donald Dickson, R.Ph., the owner of Dickson’s Pharmacy in Colebrook, New Hampshire. Colloidal oatmeal, such as Aveeno, is made for bathing. You can buy Aveeno over the counter.



Poison Ivy

A PLANT MAN PICKS TECNU

As a botanist, Dr. Eshbaugh has spent years getting up close and personal with itch-causing plants. His favorite remedy? Tecnu Oak-n-Ivy, available over the counter at drugstores. “Tecnu works on anything in the Anacardiaceae family—the family poison ivy and oak belong to,” Dr. Eshbaugh says. “You can wash with Tecnu immediately after contact with poison ivy, or you can put it on before you go out into the field. You can even use it after you have already broken out with a rash. Each way seems to work.”

PUMP UP WITH STEROIDS

If other home remedies fail, a good fallback is a steroid such as over-the-counter 1 percent hydrocortisone cream, Dr. Brassard says.

Get Rid of Poison Ivy | Garden Solutions

Q. How can we get rid of poison ivy that’s growing along the ground and up trees all over our yard. We want to make the area safe for our children? — R.S., Suffern, NY

A. Late summer is an ideal time to get rid of poison ivy because the plant has little time to recover before winter dormancy.

Wearing clothing that completely protects all exposed skin, pull all the vines off trees and lay them on the ground. Apply an herbicide specifically formulated for poison ivy control to all the foliage and stems, following label directions. Next year, any surviving shoots can be pulled up by their roots.

If you prefer to use no chemicals, try covering all the leaves and stems with black polyethylene, held down with stakes or a layer of wood chips or mulch. Without light for a year, the plant will not survive. Alternatively, you can locate every plant stem and pull it out by its roots.

Most importantly, protect yourself. All parts of the poison ivy plant, alive or dead, carry urushiol, the oil that causes problems. Never burn poison ivy, because even the smoke can cause serious injury.

Weeding Tips

Weeding may be the least favorite task a gardener must tackle. Keeping up with weeding can be tedious and overwhelming, but a little planning can ease the burden tremendously—leaving you with more time to enjoy your garden. Read on to learn about weeding tips that will save you time and keep your garden and landscape looking great.

1. KNOW YOUR LANDSCAPE

Take stock of your yard to determine which areas are prone to weed growth, may harbor stinging-insect nests, and contain allergy-inducing or poisonous plants. This will allow you to be prepared to tackle these areas with the appropriate tools and methods.

2. DRESS APPROPRIATELY

Wear gloves when weeding to protect your hands. If you prefer the bare hand method, a tip for keeping your fingernails clean is to scrape your nails over a bar of soap before weeding to seal the area between the nails and the fingers, creating a barrier from the dirt. Wear rubber boots or gardening shoes. Avoid open-toe footwear to protect your feet from dropped tools, stinging insects, or poisonous plants. Wear a hat and sunscreen and keep insect repellent handy. Keep a bottle of water close by. It’s always important to stay hydrated.

3. USE THE PROPER TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

Use knee pads or a gardening mat to cushion knees and reduce back pressure. Bring a bucket in which to gather the weeds and a pointed garden tool or small shovel to loosen weed roots.

Tip: Use a child's wagon to pull your tools around and to collect weeds.

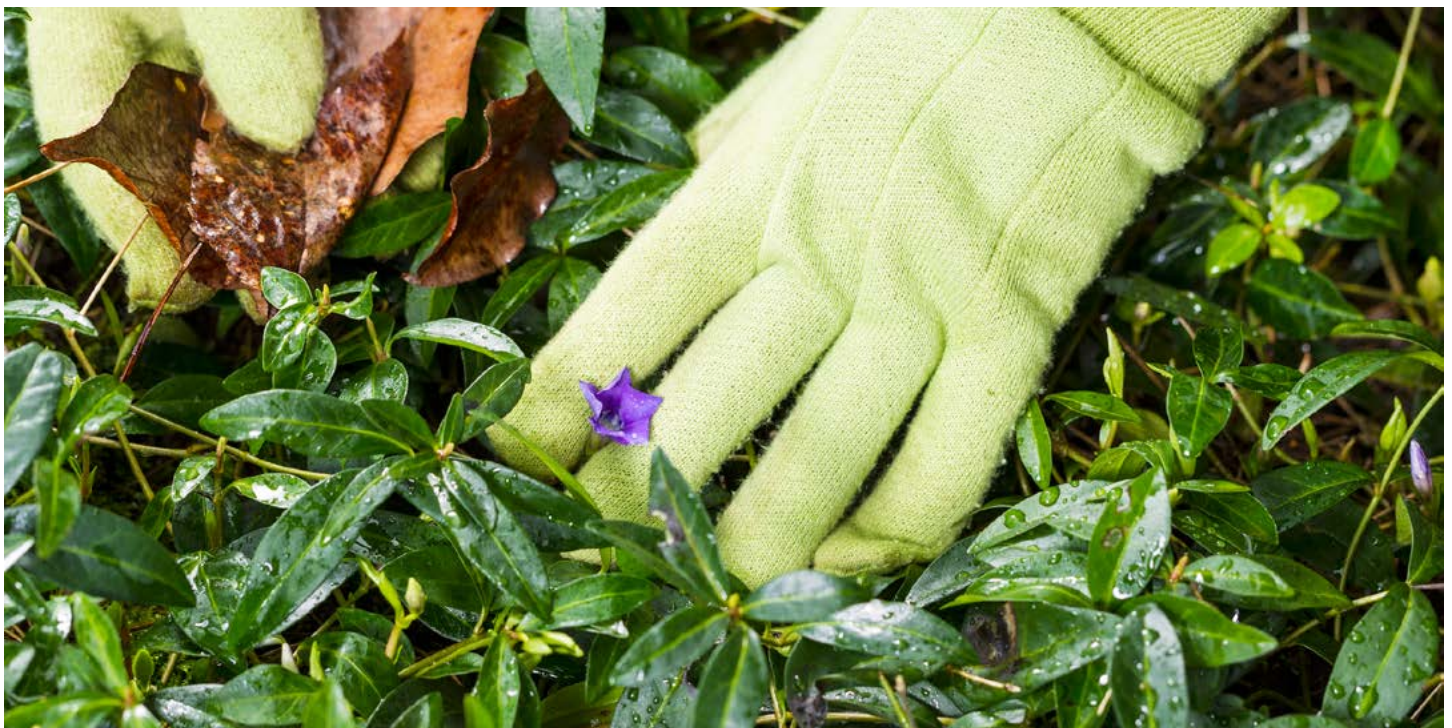
STEP-BY-STEP WEEDING INSTRUCTIONS

1. Weed after it rains or prepare the area by watering. It's much easier to loosen the soil when it's wet.
2. Grab the weed at the base and gently pull, being careful to remove all of the roots of the weed without breaking it off partially. Use a tool to loosen the dirt around the root area if needed.
3. Collect all of the weeds and dispose of in a trash receptacle. Do not compost weeds as this will encourage new weeds to grow from the seeds that may be contained in the plucked plants.

Weeding large areas. In areas with extensive weed growth, try the tarp method. Cut the weeds down close to the ground. Immediately afterwards, place a tarp over the area. Leave covered for at least three weeks. Remove the covering when the weeds are dead and dig up roots and dispose of without composting.

Liquid weed killer. If you decide to use a commercial product, purchase it from a reputable garden center and follow directions carefully. Or try this homemade recipe and instruction for a weed killing: combine 1 gallon of white vinegar, 1 cup of salt and 1/8 cup of dish liquid—do not use dishwasher liquid. Mix and pour into a spray bottle. Mist the weeds, being careful not to expose other plants. Within a few days the weeds will be dead.

Removing poisonous weeds. When removing rash and skin irritating weeds such as poison ivy, poison oak and giant hogweed, be SURE to wear long sleeved clothing, long pants with boots, and gardening gloves with rubber gloves over them. Wear a hat and a bandana to cover your nose and mouth as well as safety goggles. Remove poisonous weeds as you would other weeds, taking extreme extra care to avoid any contact with skin whatsoever. Keep in mind that some poisonous weeds remain poisonous even after they appear to be dead. When using the tarp method or spray to kill weeds, be sure to wear protective clothing when placing and removing the tarp and when removing the remaining vegetation. Dispose of both sets of gloves and wash clothing separately in cold water at least three times. Hose down rubber boots and clean with dish detergent before rinsing thoroughly.



Weeding can help prevent poison ivy or poison oak from taking over your garden.

...and More

Plants that Repel Insects and Garden Pests | Natural Gardening

Have the summer insects and pests been “bugging” or attacking you and your prized plants? Why not introduce plants that repel insects and garden pests naturally. These herbs and flowers deter mosquitoes, black flies, slugs, snails, ticks, moles, deer, ants and horn worms and work with nature to combat the not-so-welcome insects and pests that invade your lawn and garden in the summer.

PLANTS THAT REPEL INSECTS AND GARDEN PESTS

Marigolds: These compact flowers, with their brightly colored hues of yellow and orange, have a strong, distinct smell that makes this a plant that repels insects like mosquitoes and black flies. A great border plant to have around your home and outside seating areas. Marigolds work even better when planted near tomatoes to help to repel the dreaded tomato horn worm. Deer are not fond of the scent of marigolds either, and may decide not to munch on the more tempting fruits and veggies if they're planted close by. These flowers will continue to bloom all summer and throughout the fall as long as they are deadheaded on a regular basis. Deadheaded buds may be dried and the seeds saved for next year.

Citronella: Yes, it's actually a plant, and not a chemical! The strong citrus smell of this plant will repel insects like mosquitoes and black flies. A great container plant to have on your porch or deck to complement and work with marigolds to ward off predatory blood-thirsty insects.

Catnip: This herb does double duty as both a natural mosquito repellent and a fun treat to entertain our feline friends — not only as it's growing but also after it's dried — as it can be packaged up and made into sachets that your cat can enjoy anytime throughout the year!

Garlic: It's not just for vampires! Garlic wards off garden pests such as slugs, snails, ticks, and some grubs. Japanese beetles avoid garlic as well, though these pests are all but impossible to eliminate altogether. Garlic also helps to keep mosquitoes at bay. The added bonus is that you can eat it too!

Castor Oil Plant: This plant is said to discourage moles and mice from invading lawns as well as being effective on deterring deer and many species of ants.

Get Rid of Rodents and Other Pests

Do you have problems with pests invading your gardens and flower beds? Follow these simple solutions to get rid of rodents and Japanese beetles.

GET RID OF RODENTS WITH ONIONS AND GARLIC

Chipmunks, squirrels, mice, and voles love to nibble on your prized tulip bulbs. An easy way to stop them is to interplant members of the genus *Allium* (which includes onions, garlic, and chives, among others) with your tulips and other bulbs that are enticing to rodents. Try ornamental onion bulbs known for their cut flower potential, such as drumstick chives (*Allium sphaerocephalon*).

Here's another onion-related shortcut for foiling bulb-munching critters. Sprinkle a little onion juice in the hole as you plant your tulip bulbs. To make onion juice, just throw some onions in a blender with a little water and



Grey Squirrel

blend on high for several seconds. Onions that are past their prime for cooking are perfect for a batch of onion juice. Check your onion supply, or ask your local market gardener if he has any onions that have gone bad.

Garlic planted with bulbs also tends to repel rodents. Try sticking some garlic cloves in the bed at the same time you plant bulbs in the fall. The garlic will sprout during the winter, so not only will this tactic repel rodents but it also will mark all the spots where you can expect to see bulbs pop up in the spring. Next spring, you can clip the garlic greens, chop them up, and eat them in salads or use them in stir-fries.

PROTECT BULBS WITH CRUSHED SHELLS AND PEPPER

Another way to protect your prized bulbs is to sprinkle crushed oyster shells or clamshells and a couple of teaspoons of cayenne pepper on top of the bulbs as you plant them. If you don't have access to a beach, visit a farm store or feed supplier to buy the crushed shells. Critters don't like the feel of the shells or the fiery kick of the cayenne.

INSTALL WIRE MESH UNDER A RAISED BED

If voles or other rodents are digging in your garden, screen them out for good by installing a simple mesh barrier beneath a raised bed. You can buy a kit for framing a raised bed or fashion one yourself from scrap boards or landscape timbers. Clear the area where you plan to install the bed and spread rustproof wire mesh over the area. Then assemble the frame right on top of the wire mesh, using a staple gun to secure the edges of the mesh to the outside of the frame. Add 6 inches or more of soil and compost to the bed, and you're ready to plant. Once the initial work is done, you'll have years of successful gardening without any rodent problems. (This setup will not work for some root crops, such as longer carrot varieties.)

PROTECT SQUASH WITH PANTY HOSE

To stop squash vine borers almost without effort, try the panty hose technique used by Illinois gardener and former biology professor Keith Crotz. "Cut a leg off a pair of panty hose at the ankle and thigh level," Keith says. "Roll it tightly and set the roll around the base of a plant once the first set of leaves form." Then let the vine grow for a week or two. After the vine has lengthened, unroll the hose along the vine, covering the cotyledons and bas-

es of leaf stems as well as the main stem. Eventually, you'll extend the hose to protect the first 12 inches or so of the main stem. The barrier prevents vine borer moths from laying eggs at the base of the plant, which is the most vulnerable part. This technique works for squash, melons, pumpkins, and zucchini.

Get Rid of Ants in the Kitchen

Use this simple recipe to get rid of ants in the kitchen.

This simple recipe using sugar, Borax and water will get rid of ants in the kitchen. Ants are cannibals. One ant will eat the mixture and die. Another will eat the dead ant and die. Eventually, you'll get the whole nest.

Ingredients

1 cup of confectioners' sugar

1 cup of Borax

Water

Instructions

Mix sugar with Borax and add enough water to make a syrup. Put this mixture in flat pans or jar lids and place them under counters and behind appliances, but out of reach of children and pets.

READER TIPS

Joe B: At camp I dip cotton balls in the syrup mixture, insert it in mason jars, and poke holes in the lid that are big enough for ants to crawl through. That way dogs can't get it. Sort of like the Roach Motel. Any old jar with holes in the lid will do. Safe for pets. Well, unless your dog eats glass jars.

Geraldine R: I have pets and won't use Borax but found last year that cinnamon sticks in the windows by screen and cinnamon sprinkles around the doors 'n porch keep them out also...much safer for all animals!

Get Rid of Skunk Odor | Methods to Deskunk Your Dog

Everyone knows that tomato juice is handy for deskunking a dog, but it's not the only old-time remedy that works to get rid of skunk odor from your dog. Some other ingredients to keep on hand in quantity in case of emergency include vanilla extract, apple cider vinegar, and hydrogen peroxide. Try dousing a skunked dog with about a cup of vanilla extract mixed in a gallon of water to get rid of skunk odor, says Hazel Christiansen, a longtime professional groomer and former president of the American Grooming Shop Association, in Lewiston, Idaho. Let the dog soak in the solution for about 10 minutes before applying dog shampoo and rinsing.

For the vinegar remedy, mix 2 parts water with 1 part apple cider vinegar, and set the solution aside (the total amount you'll need to mix depends on the size of your dog). Thoroughly wet your smelly dog's coat with water. Now, work the vinegar solution through the fur. Let the solution sit for about 5 minutes; then rinse thoroughly. Work carefully and be sure the solution doesn't drip into your dog's eyes (it would sting).

If neither of the concoctions above seems to work, here's one last skunk-odor removing remedy that's been passed on from one generation of dog lovers to the next. Mix 1 quart hydrogen peroxide, ¼ cup baking soda, and 1 teaspoon dish-washing liquid. Apply this mixture in the same way you would the vinegar solution. The quantities listed should make enough deskunking solution for a medium-size dog (30 to 50 pounds), so use less or more as needed for the size of your dog.

The best way to eliminate skunk odor is to avoid it altogether. Believe it or not, skunks hate strong odors. You can

keep them out of your woodshed or other outbuildings by hanging a bar of strong disinfectant or room deodorizer in the space.

Companion Planting to Get Rid of Garden Pests

Despite their size, or lack there-of, the creepy-crawly and winged variety of pests can do serious damage to your garden before you even know they're there. It may be tempting to seek vengeance with a toxic chemical solution, but first consider a more natural approach like companion planting — the pairing of beneficial plants.

When you don't want to spray your vegetable garden with an insecticide, companion planting will keep bugs away naturally. For example, marigolds planted around the border of a garden will deter many insects, and they are especially good at luring Japanese beetles away from your herbs and vegetables. In the morning, you will find hundreds of groggy bugs clinging to the marigold blossoms; pick them off and drop them into a bucket of soapy water.

DISCOURAGE MOSQUITOES AND FLIES WITH HERBS



Plant herbs in your garden.

Don't let mosquitoes and flies keep you out of the garden — simply plant basil and rosemary to banish these bugs.

GET RID OF SLUGS WITH GARLIC

Slugs love to munch on tender plant leaves. Intersperse garlic with the other plants in your garden to keep slugs away. Need a more immediate fix for this slimy problem? You can also get rid of slugs with beer. Yes, beer, although both cola and sugar water will work in a pinch.

CONTROL CABBAGE WORMS WITH MINT

Planting fragrant herbs such as mint will keep cabbage worms out of your vegetable garden. Rosemary and Thyme are also good deterrents.

ATTRACT APHIDS WITH NASTURTIUMS

Sometimes it pays to plant flowers that attract bugs near your vegetables. Nasturtiums are a favorite of aphids, and this fuss-free flower can lure them away from your prized vegetable plants. This is sometimes referred to as trap cropping.

Get Rid of Silverfish

Silverfish aren't only annoying, they're also destructive. They eat glue, books, papers, artwork and clothing and can cause hundreds of dollars worth of damage. Use these methods to rid these pesky insects from your home.

BUILD A SILVERFISH TRAP

To get rid of silverfish, put about 1/4-inch of flour in a small straight-sided glass. Run a strip of adhesive tape from bottom to top on the outside. Silverfish will travel up the tape and drop into the glass, but they won't be able to get back out. Place a glass or two in each room where you've seen silverfish.

LURE SILVERFISH WITH SUGAR

You can also eliminate silverfish by sprinkling a solution of boric acid and sugar around a room. The acid is poisonous; never put it in spots where children or pets can get at it.

PROTECT CLOTHING FROM PESTS

Add whole cloves to bags of stored clothing to keep out moths and silverfish.

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