

PEST CONTROL WITH A CONSCIENCE

By Verna Berger

Green, Go Organic, and Environmentally Friendly: recognize these terms? Of course you do, they are tossed around in every arena of our life today. Our gardens are no exception. Many of us have experimented with organic pesticides in the past only to find they do not always have a residual effect, resulting in a more time consuming task of eradicating pests from our gardens.

Try using some of the newer environmentally friendly pesticides and organic matter in our garden maintenance programs.

One of those products is 'Dr. Earth Pro-Active Certified 100% Organic Insect Spray'. (According to Ron Kok of Amsterdam Greenhouses, this product is not available in B.C. but there are similar products available.) they are all good and effective; however, this more recent introduction does seem to have a little more residual effect. Anything that saves time and effort is worth trying in my estimation.

Information provided by Dr. Earth says: "in many instances, even a combination of cultural, physical and biological controls won't be enough to remedy a pest problem. In these cases, you will face the choice of losing your harvest, flowers and valuable plants or you have the choice to use organically acceptable insect sprays.

Organically acceptable pesticides have three characteristics that distinguish them from their synthetic counterparts. They are derived from natural substances, they are generally less toxic to humans than synthetic pesticides and they break down relatively quickly in the environment to harmless substances.

Farmers and homeowners used botanical pesticides to control both indoor and outdoor pests long before synthetic pesticides were formulated in the mid 1900s. Some of the earliest insecticides were extracted from plants growing in tropical forests and other natural environments. These very special plants are now grown commercially to produce botanical insecticides. Some of these natural components are made by grinding raw plants such as flowers, roots, stems or seeds. Others are extracted from plant materials, then refined and purified into essential oils.

The general idea is to make a pungent insecticide that will fool pests into turning away from their favorite plants. These highly specialized essential oil blends in the proper ratios kill insects, deter insect feeding and confuse the pests smell receptors (often located on their feet). These essential oils and other inert oils make pests habitats inhospitable; they also coat and suffocate insects and scales. Essential oils also reduce the number of pest eggs laid and the amount of feeding damage caused by a board range of pests."

Garlic extract, one essential ingredient, repels insects for several weeks, while several other oils along with molasses allow the spray to naturally stick to foliage. Most sprays will damage fuchsia buds and blossoms, so caution should be exercised once plants reach that stage. Testing any product new to you in an inconspicuous place on your plant is recommended. In our experience the natural product 'Simple Green' does not harm most blossoms, but the light pinks and white do seem to be affected.

Dr. Earth claims its spray will kill Aphids, Leafhoppers, Caterpillars, Beetles, Whiteflies, Mites, Mealybugs, Earwigs, Scale, Centipedes, Gnats, Silverfish, Spiders, Cockroaches, Ticks, Pillbugs, Crickets, Fleas, and other insects.

None of us likes to think about the unpleasant side of caring for Fuchsias. However, if we want to have beautiful plants, pest and disease control is inevitable. We all know about the damage pesticides cause our environment, as well as ourselves. Here are some methods of controlling the most common pests and diseases that attack Fuchsias, providing they are introduced prior to a full-blown infestation. Soft Bodied Insects, such as Whitefly and aphids can be controlled with a mixture of: 1 Tablespoon of grated Ivory Soap, 1 cup 70% Isopropyl Alcohol and Water to make 1 quart.

This is a contact insect killer and is not persistent, so you must spray directly on the insect. It doesn't affect the eggs or the larvae. White fly must be sprayed faithfully every three days for 12 days, in order to eradicate an infestation with a pesticide, so if applying this mixture, check your plants on a daily basis.

Safe Soap is also a good product and is readily available.

Simple Green is a degreaser available to hardware stores. It doesn't seem to harm the foliage or the blossoms. One reason it works on whitefly is they have a waxy body, which this is able to break down and wash them away. Again, this is not persistent, so will need to be repeated every 3 days. (2 oz. - 4 oz. Simple Green to 1 Gallon water.)

Predators: You may wish to introduce natural predators, such as Ladybugs, Lacewings, and White Spiders, into your yard.

Pungent Plants: Chives and Garlic planted in a garden will keep aphids away. The strong smell of Rosemary, Nasturtiums, Peppermints, Sage and Basil are known to keep many flying insects and ants away.

Yellow Boards: Whiteflies are attracted to the colour yellow. Size is immaterial but should be adequate to attract the attention of the Whitefly. In a small area, paint stirrers work well, larger areas require approximately a 12" square board. Paint boards or sticks a bright yellow, then coat the upper side with heavy motor oil (90 weight) or Vaseline. The whitefly will fly to the board and are trapped in the sticky substance. Watch these traps, and when they are full, just scrape the boards clean, apply a new coat of sticky substance and replace the trap.

Seaweed Extract: Some sources report regular use of Seaweed Extract when watering will help to control Whitefly.

Keep in mind these methods of control are not very effective if a full-blown infestation already exists. The best solution at that point is chemical pesticides. Internet sites that may be helpful in your search for natural, organic remedies for a variety of maladies are: www.bugspray.com www.gardensalive.com

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