

Simple tips for keeping insect pests at bay

There are hundreds or thousands of different insects that find their way in and through our gardens every year. Most are harmless or even helpful. Some are annoying. Some are destructive and have a significant impact. Managing them is a challenge. If we first accept that they are there, we can then move to minimizing their impact.

- **Start clean** – Insect pests can, and will, arrive under their own power. Bringing them into your garden seems like tempting fate. Ensure that any plants that you introduce to your garden are free from insects or other pests.
- **Know your friends** – There are many beneficial insects running, flying or crawling through the garden. Recognize those insects that aren't doing any damage or that might be helping out. Just because it is on the plant, doesn't mean it is hurting it.
- **Know (and understand) your foe** – Be aware of the different pests that can damage your plants. Know that what they and their damage looks like, as well as a bit about their life cycle. This way, you can know whether you have a problem or not and how best to minimize their impact.
- **Encourage rivalries** – Consider encouraging and/or introducing beneficial insects as a way to manage the problem insects. Plant species that serve as a "home" for the beneficial insects and implement practices that encourage them to stay.
- **Exclusion** – Some plants can be protected by keeping the pests off. Depending on the pest, you might protect using plant covers, short mesh screens (for those insects that are low flying), barriers around the base of the plants or other means of keeping insects from either feeding on or laying their eggs on or around the host plant.
- **Lure and trap the scoundrels** – If you can't beat them, trick them, then destroy them. Many insects are drawn to plants by detecting chemical "odours" put out by the host plants. Others are drawn by colour or other triggers. Use this to your advantage. Put out trap plants, sticky traps, baits (liquid or solid) and generally draw the pests to where you can either remove them or kill them.
- **Remove and destroy** – Some pests are big enough or occur in dense enough populations that you can pick them up and remove them (and perhaps the plant part that they are on) easily. Anything that you can do to interrupt their life cycle and cut down the population, the better off you'll be.