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Mitigating Mosquitos

Sitting on the porch after a long day is one of my favorite relaxing ways. Unfortunately, mosquitoes also like visiting our porch and can be annoying. Along with being annoying, some mosquitoes can also transmit diseases that can affect people and animals. There are a couple of different approaches to controlling mosquitoes in your yard.

Making changes in your yard can make the habitat less favorable for mosquitoes. Mosquitoes require water to lay their eggs in and for the larvae to grow. Reducing the amount of standing water will, in turn, reduce the number of mosquitoes. Look around your yard for spots where water accumulates after a rain and remove objects, like old tires, that hold water or regularly dump them. Fill in any low spots where water pools and clean out drainage ditches to ensure water can flow through them. Also, if you have bird baths or pet waterers, changing the water in them at least once a week will aid in reducing the mosquito population.

If standing water cannot be eliminated, larvicides made specially for mosquitoes can be added to control mosquitoes. Larvicide chemicals to look for include temephos (Abate), Bti, *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (Teknar, Vectobac), and methoprene (Altosid). They can usually be found at a local farm store or garden center. “Mosquito dunks” made from bacteria that kill mosquitoes and contain *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (Bti) can also be added to small ponds to kill mosquito larvae. Another option to control mosquitoes if you have a small pond is to stock the pond with goldfish or minnows that will eat mosquito larvae.

Adult mosquitoes like to find places that are damp, dark, and cool to rest in during the daytime. Commonly, finding tall grasses, shrubs, or other vegetation is an ideal spot. Keeping grass and shrubs trimmed around the house will help deter mosquitoes. Spraying shrubs and other shaded areas with a residual insecticide to kill mosquitoes that try to hide in those areas is also an option. Appropriately labeled aerosol insecticide may be used. Some active ingredients to look for in insecticides include carbaryl, malathion, and various pyrethroids (again, these ingredients usually end in -thrin). Read the insecticide label before applying to make sure the product is used according to the guidelines and will not harm vegetation to which it is applied. While there are many mosquito traps available on the market, traps based on the release of CO₂ do not reduce the mosquito population to the level where there is a noticeable decline in mosquito numbers, and traps based on ultrasound technology are not effective for reducing the nuisance level.

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