

Pesticides and You

News from the National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides (NCAMP)

One in a Series of NCAMP "How-To's"

Organic Gardening: The Basics

Garden pests can be a nuisance and reduce crop yields. Fortunately, there are many alternatives to chemically intensive practices which result in bountiful crops, and improve soil.

The principle of sensible growing is to correct the cause of problems which occur, rather than merely treating the symptoms.

•••**Develop healthy soil.** Test your soil and adjust soil nutrient content and pH with the use of compost, animal manures, green manures, rock powders, crop rotations, lime, gypsum, oak leaves and acid peat moss.

•••**Use crop rotations** to: control plant diseases, reduce insect outbreaks, use soil nutrients, and condi-

tion the soil.

•••**Implement intercropping.** Planting several types of plants in each growing area discourages pests from spreading, aids beneficial insects, shades out weeds, and increases yields.

•••**Plant pest-repellent herbs & flowers.** For example, marigolds seem to repel cabbage moths.

•••**Water deeply and infrequently.** This encourages deep roots, which in turn releases nutrients, aerates the soil, and prevents erosion.

•••**Mulch for weeds.** Apply thick layers of straw or hay between plants and rows after the soil has warmed.

•••**Harness beneficial animals.** Predatory mites, parasitic wasps and

flies, spiders, and lady beetles help control pest populations.

•••**Identify pests.** It is difficult to eliminate pest problems unless you know the identity of the pest.

Weeds. Frequent, small hoeings will keep weeds under control.

Disease. Plant diseases result from nutrient deficiencies, poor drainage, and infection by fungi, bacteria or viruses. Disease resistant varieties are another useful tool.

Insects. Good cultural practices will prevent most problems, but when outbreaks occur, use biological control, traps, and barriers. Hand pick large insects. Products like B.t. and insecticidal soaps can also be helpful.

For more information, write for NCAMP's gardening tips brochure (\$2) or consult organic gardening books in your local library.