Earth Friendly Pest Control

Unfortunately, garden pests are a fact of life. You will never be able to eliminate all pests from a thriving garden, but there are ways to keep them under control. Listed are a few earth-friendly options:

EARLY PREVENTION

Eliminate problems as you see them forming, by checking your plants regularly for signs of pest or disease damage. Use that evening stroll in the garden as a "scouting trip" for potential problems. Look carefully at your plants, turning over leaves and noting overall appearance. A garden journal is useful for keeping records throughout the season.

HANDPICKING/PRUNING

Large, slow moving pests are the easiest to handpick. Caterpillars, slugs and snails can be collected and dropped in a bucket of soapy water. A strong jet of water from the garden hose will dislodge aphids, while larger flying insects such as Japanese beetles can be shaken off a plant onto a dropcloth or into a bucket. Early morning is best for this procedure, before beetles become active. Bagworm cocoons, tent caterpillars and webworms can be pruned away and disposed of. Disease problems such as rose canker and fireblight can also be pruned out: dip your tools between cuts in a 10% bleach solution.

TRAPS & BARRIERS

Sticky traps can be used for aphids, white fly and gypsy moth caterpillars. A 2-inch barrier of diatomaceous earth can keep earwigs, slugs and snails away from plants. Protect seedlings from damaging cutworms by using Safer Brand products. These are organic insect control products. Follow label instructions.

NATURAL PREDATORS

Encourage helpful bugs to move into your yard. Ladybugs, praying mantids, assassin bugs and lacewings are some examples of insects that actively consume pests such as aphids, mites, caterpillars and thrips. Birds are among the most efficient insect predators, plus frogs and toads love slugs, snails and cutworms. So, you might want to attract a few of these creatures to your garden.

GOOD CULTURAL PRACTICES

Healthy plants are less susceptible to pests and diseases. Good health starts with planting in a suitable location. Plants forced to live in conditions that don't suit their needs will never thrive. Rhododendrons and azaleas, for example, are more prone to lacebug attack when planted in a hot, sunny site, rather than shade. Always amend the soil with organic matter like compost and manure, mushroom compost or Brewer's Compost before planting. Also, fertilizing at the appropriate times and paying careful attention to water needs are vital to maintaining healthy plants.

the Garden FACTORY

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