

**Seeding,
Weeding
and mulch
more**

For the avid gardener

Sprayers: Garden Artillery

Once plants are up and growing, the battle against insects and diseases in the home garden intensifies. Every gardener should own a small one to two gallon sprayer. This is a big enough "artillery piece" to knock out just about any pesky insect horde.

Many gardeners like to dust their plots, but this is an expensive and messy way to do the job. The chemical particles, for one thing, blow all over the place.

Main targets in this counter attack are the chewing and sucking insects that riddle vegetable and other plant leaves with unsightly holes.

Sevin and malathion are ex-

cellent chemicals to use in combination. Sevin kills the chewing insects like the striped cucumber beetle and the bean beetle, while malathion wipes out sucking insects like aphids and leaf hoppers. It also may be necessary to use kelthane if spider mite problems develop later in the growing season.

Other effective chemicals for home garden use are the fungicides Maneb and Captan. They're safe for homeowners to use and can be sprayed right up to five days before harvest.

Malathion, Sevin and Maneb or Captan are used in a mixture at the

rate of two tablespoonfuls each per gallon of water. Put a cup of water and the chemicals in a jar with a lid on it and shake it to make a "gravy."

Since these are toxic materials, they should be handled with special caution. Always read the label and follow directions to the letter. Once the slurry is mixed, dump it into the sprayer with the required amount of water.

This is a shotgun approach to pest control but it will do a good job on most of the insect pests as well as reduce the incidence of diseases. Be sure to mix only enough material to do the job. Disposing of leftover pesticides mixtures is difficult and dangerous.

In applying the chemicals, a light misty spray on plants is enough. It's not necessary to give them a bath.

A common mistake many gardeners make is to wait until the entire crop is plastered with insects and diseases. Then they expect to find some miracle chemicals to cure the problem. This isn't possible. The only way to achieve good pest control is to have a well-planned spray program.

Once the spray operation is done, clean the sprayer with fresh water. Hang it up with the plunger out so it will dry. With proper care, this type of sprayer should last many years. Since it can be used on most flower crops, too, it's a good investment, he says.

Gardening teaches wonders of nature

If you're in an area where deer abound, have you noticed that these animals love to graze on tulips but will not touch daffodils?

Deer also love sunflowers, black-eyed susans and strawberry plants. But they don't usually both Shasta daisies. Nor do they seem to have much appetite for crown-vetch, which is a legume sometimes seeded in pasture mixes for cattle.

In the bird world, every species seems to have its favorite garden crop. Robins go for strawberries, cherries and blueberries, while mocking birds love gooseberries and raspberries. Several kinds of birds go wild over mulberries. But no birds seem to care for snowberries.

Even a veteran gardener never stops learning new things, observes Dr. Conrad B. Link, professor emeritus, who retires last year after 34 years as an Extension floriculture specialist at the University of Maryland in College Park.

Many of these "new things" are not really new at all, Link observes. Nor are they normally found in textbooks. They are the unexplainable whims of nature, including birds and wild animals.

For instance, Link asks, why is it that squirrels seem to prefer eating the bulbs of yellow crocuses? And what explains their uncanny ability to dig up the bulbs of only yellow crocuses in a bed of mixed colors during the dormant season?

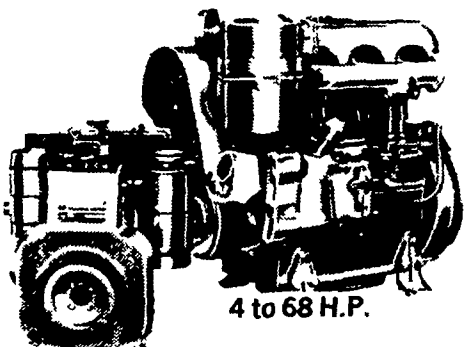


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