

Simple, Safe, and Effective Ways to Control Mosquitoes In Your Yard and Neighborhood

Warm weather and mosquitoes are here, leading many of us to look for ways to enjoy the outdoors without being pestered by those little annoying—and sometimes disease-bearing—biters.



Public health organizations like CDC provide information about human health risks from mosquito bites. Entomologists, including experts at Virginia Tech, local authorities, and Virginia Cooperative Extension recommend practical ways to control mosquitos (see links below). Arlington Regional Master Naturalists encourage you to help protect wildlife including pollinators and other beneficial insects by avoiding use of pesticides. Here we share the best tips for control of mosquitoes and personal protection.

Eliminate potential mosquito-breeding areas as the first and BEST line of defense.

1. **Empty/clean out spaces that may collect water.** Mosquitoes can breed in still water as small as a bottle cap in as little as 3 days. So, be sure you:
 - a. Unclog gutters.
 - b. Cover, turn over, or move indoors any equipment, trash cans, buckets, pet bowls, or toys that might collect water (check container lids and handles, too).
 - c. Empty flower pot saucers or drill holes so they drain after watering.
 - d. Straighten sagging tarps or other covers to eliminate collection of water.
 - e. Prevent puddling under outdoor faucets or air conditioning drains.
 - f. Make sure you have good screens on rain barrels (or use Mosquito Dunks ®)*.
 - g. Consider replacing corrugated downspouts or other open pipes with smooth pipes.
 - h. Cut back vegetation such as English Ivy which can hold pooled water where mosquitoes may breed, and which provides the humid environment they like.
2. **For areas of uncovered water, such as decorative water features, bird baths or water collecting in low areas in your yard:**
 - a. Drain the water or change the water regularly—at least every 3-4 days or keep the water moving (e.g., with a fountain, pump, or “bubbler”), or
 - b. Kill mosquito larvae before they become adults! Use Mosquito Dunks ®* or other *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (Bt-i) product on larger water features or puddles that don't drain in a few days or can't be changed.
3. **Help your neighbors discover and remove water sources from their yards. Share what you know, and what to do!** Because mosquitoes fly about as far as a block, you and your neighbors can have a positive impact on your area.
4. **If you're away from home for several days, tip/cover still water containers, or ask a neighbor to help.**

Personal Protection Tips to Help Keep Mosquitos Away.

1. **Keep mosquitos out of your house.** Check all window and door screens to be sure they have no holes.
2. **Wear light-colored long pants and long-sleeved shirts and use mosquito repellants on exposed skin when you are outside.** Check labels on any repellants to be sure they're safe for children or sensitive individuals.
3. **Use a fan to keep air moving.** Mosquitoes are very weak flyers and this will help keep them away while providing a cooling breeze.

Spraying is the Least Effective Control for Mosquitoes and It Can Harm Other Wildlife.

1. **It's a hit-or-miss proposition.** Many sprays kill mosquitoes only through direct contact. So, mosquitoes that are not hit by a spray, or the next group of mosquitoes flying through a sprayed area, may not be affected by the spray. Some pesticides may be effective on foliage for longer periods of time but not prevent the next batch of mosquito larvae from hatching out in a few days.
2. **Mosquito pesticide sprays are toxic to other insects, including insects on which birds feed, insects that eat mosquitoes, butterflies and other pollinators, and fish and small aquatic organisms that are vital parts of the ecosystem.**

Some useful resources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention/index.html>,

Virginia Cooperative Extension Service:

http://offices.ext.vt.edu/arlington/programs/anr/arlington_anr_current_news.html

Arlington County: <https://health.arlingtonva.us/environmental-health/mosquito-information-center/>

Maryland Department of Agriculture: <http://mda.maryland.gov/plants-pests/Pages/Zika.aspx>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (mosquito control): <https://www.epa.gov/mosquitocontrol>

Arlington Regional Master Naturalists: <https://armn.org/mosquitos-and-ticks/>



Help save bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects!

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