

Natural Solutions For the Garden

A lot of people have no idea how many home-made gardening solutions are actually in their house right now. Rather than spending a lot of money on chemical-based pesticides, which are actually banned in many Canadian municipalities, why not go through the cupboards, look under the sink, in the pantry and on the shelves of the laundry room to see what you can find. Try mixing up a few of these home-made recipes for bug sprays and simple kitchen-made solutions to deter slugs and snails and learn how simple things like coffee grounds and fireplace ashes can actually help your garden grow!

Insect and Critter Deterrents

All Purpose Natural Bug Spray

1 tsp dish soap
1 cup vegetable oil
1 cup rubbing alcohol (optional)
1 litre water

Shake vigorously to emulsify. Use on Gladiolus, Roses or any other plants where you see foliage-eating insects.

Aphid Away Spray

1 small onion, finely chopped
2 medium cloves of garlic, finely chopped
1 tbsp dish soap
2 cups water

Put ingredients in a blender and blend on high. Let mixture sit overnight then strain through a cheesecloth or coffee filter. Apply liberally at the first sign of aphid trouble.

Thrip Dip

The greatest enemy of Gladiolus is the very tiny black gladiola thrip. Although thrips are tiny they can cause a lot of damage. They lay eggs and puncture the foliage and flower tissues and feast on the juices. The results are brown foliage, deformed flowers and thrips may even prevent the flower spike from forming. Try this Thrip Dip at the time of planting:

1 tbsp Lysol
4 litres of water

Soak gladiolus bulbs in solution for ½ hour before planting, plant while corms are still wet.

Soil additives

Spring Soil Energizer

Two weeks before you plant your flower or vegetable garden bed, fortify the soil with this easy-to-make soil energizer. This recipe makes enough to cover 100 square feet – 30 square meters of garden.

- 1 can of beer (serves as an enzyme activator to help release nutrients locked in the soil)
- ½ cup regular cola-not diet! (helps feed good bacteria)
- ½ cup dishwashing liquid (helps to soften the soil)
- ½ cup antiseptic mouthwash (destroys germs)
- ¼ tsp instant tea granules (contains tannic acid which helps plants digest their food faster)

Mix ingredients in a 20 gallon (75 liter) hose-end sprayer and saturate the soil. Be sure to do this at least two weeks before planting to give the energizer time to do its stuff!

Banana Skins

Banana skins make excellent plant fertiliser in general, not just for roses. They are rich in potassium, so they're a great organic plant fertiliser - and given that most people love the fruit, the skins are a real bonus. Plants need potassium for fruit and flower production and there are several ways you can use the skins to provide it:

- cut them up and add to your compost bin
- bury them whole when you're planting new shrubs or perennials
- and easiest of all.....toss the skins around your plants and let them rot down naturally!

Coffee Grounds

Coffee grounds contain nutrients that can give plants a gentle jolt. They're rich in nitrogen and acid loving plants such as Azaleas, Blueberries, Ferns and Rhododendrons respond well to them.

Wood ash

Wood ash from your fireplace, which contains potassium, is essential for plant growth. Spread it around the base of fruit trees, hydrangeas, roses & peonies. Vegetable root crops love it too!