

# Handy Homemade Remedies for Pest & Disease Control

by Phil Dudman

[www.phildudman.com](http://www.phildudman.com)

## SNAILS & SLUGS

### Beer Traps

If there's a little beer left over from last night's party, don't waste it! I'm not suggesting you drink it! Instead, tip it into a few glass jars and sink them into the soil about the garden. Snails will quickly slide on over for their final farewell drink with buddies... before they meet their maker! Empty and replace beer regularly.

*How does it work?*

Snails and slugs absorb the beer, get drunk and die! Who's for another drink?

### Coffee

It gives us a lift in the morning, but it's deadly to snails and slugs.

Dilute one part of strong caffeine-rich coffee with 10 parts of water. Spray it all over the foliage of your plants as well as the surrounding soil. Alternatively, sprinkle cheap instant coffee in a circle around your seedlings and the boarder of your garden.

*How does it work?*

Snails and slugs absorb it through their sensitive mucous membrane, they suffer a heart attack and die! Herbal teas just don't have the same effect!

## APHIDS

### Quick Clean Soap Spray

Clean up aphids, lace bugs, bronze orange bugs, whitefly and scale (on ferns) with this simple soap spray. Combine 2 cups of water with 2 teaspoons of dishwashing liquid (or 5-10 g pure soap) in a spray bottle. Give it a good shake and spray it all over the insects. Do it 3-4 times every 5 days to put a stop to big infestations. Note: apply it late in the day when temperatures are cool to avoid leaf burn.

*How does it work?*

On contact, the detergent dries out the pest's sensitive coating and they die.

## SCALE (and sooty mould)

### Homemade White Oil

Effective for controlling scale, mites, aphids, soft skinned grubs and citrus leaf minor.

Avoid using it in very hot weather (over 25°C) because it can burn foliage. Simply take an empty plastic bottle, pour in a cup of ordinary cooking oil and ¼ cup of dishwashing liquid. Give it a good shake - you'll see it turn white! That's your white oil concentrate. Label with bottle with the correct dilution rate – 'one tablespoon per litre of water'. It's important to stick with this rate because too much oil will cause leaf burn. Mix it well before and during spraying and make sure you cover the under surface of the leaves and any crevices where sapsuckers hide.

*How does it work?*

The coating of oil suffocates the sap-sucking insects. In the case of the adult citrus leaf minors, it makes the surface of leaves unattractive when they are looking to lay eggs.

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## GRUBS & CATERPILLARS

### Miracle Molasses

Many organic gardeners find Molasses useful in repelling leaf chewers like caterpillars. Dilute 1 tablespoons of molasses in a litre of warm water, a few drops of liquid soap, let it cool and spray it on the foliage regularly.

*How does it work?*

Chewing insects find the solution far too bitter and go elsewhere.

Molasses is a very effective deterrent to the root knot nematode that attacks plants like tomatoes, causing them to wilt. Simply dissolve 1 litre of molasses in 4 litres of warm water, allow it to cool and use it to drench the soil.

*How does it work?*

It dehydrates the nematodes and they die.

*Warning:* This will also kill good guys in the soil - like worms. This method is a quick fix and should only be used as a final measure. For long-term nematode control, incorporate loads of organic matter in your soil on a regular basis (nematodes don't like it) and practice crop rotation to avoid a build up of the pest.

### Chilli Sprays

Insects like caterpillars are reluctant to feed on plants that have been sprayed with chilli. Also useful for aphids and ants.

Handful of fresh chilli, puree with 1 litre water and add a squirt of detergent.

## POWDERY MILDEW AND BLACK SPOT

### Milk Fungicide

You only have to go as far as the fridge for this one! Milk has been found to control powdery mildew on cucumbers, zucchinis, melons, pumpkins, roses, tomatoes, grapes and begonias. A Brazilian scientist discovered its effects in the late 1990's. Tests found it more effective than traditional chemical controls. Simply mix (1) part full cream milk to (5) parts water. Spray it on upper and lower leaf surfaces (in the morning) once a week.

*How does it work?*

It's the fats and antibiotic qualities of the milk.

### Bicarb Fungicide

Bicarb has so many uses in the home and it also makes a very handy spray for controlling powdery mildew and black spot on roses. In one litre of water, add two level teaspoons of bicarbonate of soda, a drop of detergent and a drop of vegetable oil. Shake it well to dissolve the bicarb and spray it thoroughly on all surfaces of the leaves - once a week.

*How does it work?*

Detergent helps to spread the mix over the leaf surface. Oil enables the bicarb to stick to the leaf. Bicarb makes the leaf surface alkaline and that inhibits germination of fungal spores.

Some gardeners replace the oil in this recipe with a tablespoon of fish emulsion. It has a little oil in it, but more importantly, it contains beneficial bacteria that have antifungal properties. Also, fish emulsion has an NPK of 10:9:3, so every time you apply it, the plant will be absorbing some of that nutrient making it healthier and more disease resistant.

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A champion rose grower passed on this recipe to me. It's useful as a preventative treatment for black spot and mildews that affect roses.

4.5 litres of water

3 level teaspoons of bicarbonate soda

3 tablespoons of fish emulsion

Stir the liquid to completely dissolve the bicarbonate powder. Spray it 3 times over 2 weeks to get on top of the problem then follow up with a weekly application saturating the plant each time.

NEVER spray in full sunshine or in the heat of the day as the leaves may burn. Instead wait until early evening.

## **FRUIT FLY**

### **FRUIT FLY TRAPS**

Fruit Flies love their vegemite for breakfast, lunch and tea! It's the yeast that they can't resist.

Simply combine  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon of vegemite with a cup of water and pour it into a plastic drink bottle. Make some holes in the side and use some wire to hang it in trees neighbouring the one you want to protect. Fruit flies enter through the holes and drown in the water.

You need to hang lots of traps to maximize the impact and it's important to remember to empty and replace traps weekly.