

## Pesticides

Using pesticides throws the natural balance out of order. For example, wasps lay their eggs in tomato hornworms, making sure your tomatoes can grow uninhibited! Even though wasps are often considered pests, they are an important part of your garden's ecosystem. Pesticides actually don't prevent problems, they just control them as they arise. Pesticides are designed to kill (even organic ones) and this can disrupt ecosystems. Many pesticides contain glyphosate which has been linked to health and environmental risks (Pesticide Free Gardening, University of Saskatchewan 2018).



# Bugs in Your Backyard

## Did you know insects help the environment?

Most insects are beneficial to humans and to the environment. Insects provide many important services such as pollination and helping organic matter decompose.

Insects are important sources of food for other animals and when they die they cycle nitrogen back into the soil (important for soil health).

Insects also help control the population of other insects - keeping nature in balance!

green  
calgary



TD Friends of the  
Environment  
Foundation

## Take Action!

So what can you do to take action and protect the organisms that are such an important part of our ecosystems? Join the pesticide free gardening movement! Here are a few chemical free alternatives to reducing weeds and pests in your garden:

- Plant native grasses that are adapted to Alberta's climate.
- Water only as needed and keep your grass 3-4 inches tall as it helps retain moisture.
- Remove weeds by hand before they go to seed.
- Rotate annual crops each year to prevent soil depletion and diseases.
- Use essential oils to deter problem insects. Mix about 10 drops of oil per one cup of water in a spray bottle. Spray areas & plants where pests are commonly found. Peppermint oil deters ants, beetles and moths.
- Combine 1 tbsp ecofriendly dish soap with 1 cup vegetable oil. Add 4 tsp of oil mix to 1 pint of water and spray on vegetables to protect from aphids, mites and whiteflies. Store in a cool, dark location.
- In the fall keep a few piles of leaves in garden beds and under trees to provide important habitats for bugs to overwinter in. Bees, moths and butterflies need this insulation to last the winter.
- Plant marigolds near your vegetables (and other companion plants) to attract beneficial insects and drive pests away.