

How To



Use IPM in Your Garden Integrated Pest Management Tips

Pesticide use may harm our Butterfly Pavilion garden residents, whether they are butterflies, toads, goldfinches or humans. Our Horticulture staff and volunteers follow a pesticide-free garden regimen. Home gardeners who are concerned about the effects of pesticides upon their environment can do the same.

What is IPM?

Integrated Pest Management, or IPM, does not necessarily mean pesticide-free gardening. IPM is a thoughtful evaluation of the damage caused by a particular pest, based on cost/benefit analysis. Once the pest is identified, then the gardener must consider whether complete elimination is a cost-effective goal. Many times, the gardener finds that a more basic level of control is more likely; keeping the pest from causing too much damage or spreading too far.

Once the gardener has decided upon a feasible level of control, it is important to research options for the best control techniques. Each gardener must take into account all the factors that are affected by the pest control method in question: *cost, effectiveness, appearance, and risk to the environment.*

Integrated Pest Management Techniques

Physical Controls – Barriers and traps work against a wide range of vertebrate and invertebrate pests. One example might be the use of floating row covers to keep grasshoppers out of the lettuce crop. Or, sticky traps can keep meal moths from becoming a nuisance in the kitchen.

Cultural Controls – Healthy plants, with proper amounts of light, water, space and nutrients, are able to fight pests off with their own defenses. One can also avoid pests by growing a crop slightly earlier or later than a pest's appearance, or by choosing a different site. A gardener's pest problems can also disappear with wise plant choices.

Biological Controls – Pests have their own enemies, and a gardener can make use of these predators and parasites to keep the garden community healthy. Ladybird beetles are the most famous examples, of course, but parasitic wasps and predaceous mites are available for gardeners to buy and apply in their own gardens. Gardeners can also encourage pests' natural enemies by planting favored nectar sources, such as yarrow and dill.

Chemical Controls – Integrated Pest Management does not necessarily forbid chemical use in the garden; it only encourages a thoughtful evaluation whether a chemical pesticide is the best bet for a garden. Would a systemic pesticide enter the nectar of a plant and poison pollinators? Is there the chance of drift to a neighbor's property or open space? If a chemical pesticide is used as a last resort, IPM mandates that it be used safely and responsibly, with minimal harm to the environment.

Integrated Pest Management encourages gardeners to weigh all their options and to look closely at their needs before deciding upon any pest control technique. This same approach may be applied to weed management. Healthier gardens and healthier gardeners result from this balance.

