Warm Weather Mosquito Control

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Summer is here, bringing with it longer days, warmer temperatures…and mosquitoes. It's prime time to enjoy life in your backyard. Unlike past summers, however, mosquitoes may cause you and your family far more trouble than the occasional itch. Now they may carry the dangerous West Nile Virus.

A mosquito-free backyard means that you can enjoy dinner outside in the peaceful area you created, or watch the moon rise without constantly slapping and swatting. While eliminating all mosquitoes is not possible, there are steps you can take to minimize their interference with your fun and greatly reduce the possibility of your exposure to the diseases they may carry.

Removal or reduction of larval mosquito habitats typically is the most effective and economical long-term method of mosquito control. Repellents do help reduce the incidence of bites, but it is far more efficient and personally comfortable to eliminate mosquito populations before they hatch and launch their attack.

Reduce their natural habitat

Water is the key ingredient to mosquito life. Adult mosquitoes lay their eggs anywhere they can find still water. Within 48 hours the eggs begin to hatch, and then, depending primarily upon temperature, the larvae evolve into adults within another 4 to 31 days.

You can significantly reduce the number of mosquitoes in your yard by scouting for breeding places and eliminating them. For example, remove old tires or buckets where rainwater can collect, and clean out clogged rain gutters. If you have a pond, add a feature such as a waterfall, fountain, or aerator. These options will not only enhance its beauty, but will also prevent it from becoming a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

It also helps to keep your yard free of areas where adult mosquitoes might nest during the day. Clear off brush and debris that hold moisture and provide shade from the sun.

Utilize mosquito control products in your pond

Insecticides can be very effective in your pond. Mosquito Dunks, Quick-Kill Mosquito Bits, and Mosquito Larvicide & Repellent Granules have all been proven safe. They will not harm plants or fish, but they will help eradicate mosquito larvae.

Rely on the help of natural predators

Mosquitoes are an important food source for many bird, reptile, amphibian, fish and other animals in the food chain. You can enlist their help:

- **Attract bats to your environment** - Bats are renowned for keeping night-flying insects at bay, and a favorite bat meal is mosquitoes. It is estimated that one bat can catch up to 600 mosquitoes in one hour! Take a cue from the folks in Europe who have been using bat houses to eliminate mosquitoes since the early 1900s. Most bat houses, when placed properly, will be occupied within one year of placement.
- **Stock mosquito-eating fish** - The most common and effective naturalistic control of mosquitoes is offered by mosquito-eating fish. Mosquito fish, for example, can eat 100 to 500 mosquito larvae per day. They play an important role in mosquito control in ponds, canals, irrigated fields and some other freshwater sources. Small backyard ponds can be stocked with Koi, Sarasa Comets, or Shubunkins. Check with your fish & game department regarding local regulations before stocking.

Try an insect trap

Devices utilizing natural attractants can reduce large numbers of mosquitoes, especially when used regularly. The SonicWeb Insect Trap, for example, attracts mosquitoes and other

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low-flying insects - over an entire acre - through a combination of low frequency vibrations, scents, and heat.

Whichever control methods you utilize, remember that the mosquito lifecycle is about four weeks. If you want to make a dent in their populations, you need to utilize control methods on a regular basis. The more you stick to your program, the more effective it will become.

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