



# 6 Steps to Reducing Pesticides When Gardening

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The truth is, I don't have much of a green thumb. I tend to be better at ending the life of plants and animals than having them flourish under my care. But despite my weakness in this area, there are some principles in pest control that could be useful in gardening. Below are some tips you might want to consider:



## Know and Understand Your Garden Pests

Based on what you will be growing you can determine the pests that might attack your garden. Knowing these pests early on allows you to make changes proactively at the beginning of the growing season rather than trying to play catch up when the damage has already been done. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is the methodology of knowing the behavior and biology of a pest and changing the environment to make it harder for that pest to reproduce and flourish. Keep in mind that a pest can be any type of insect, bird or rodent that could damage your garden.

## Tilling the Soil in the Winter

Insect pests will overwinter in the soil and this is part of the reason farmers till the ground in the fall after their harvest. Tilling refreshes the soil with vital nutrients and exposes overwintering insects to the cold. But if you till during the winter in addition to the fall, this exposes the destructive insects to freezing temperatures that naturally will kill them when they are most vulnerable.

## Consider Rotating Your Garden

We know that if the same crop is planted every year, the population of insects that feed off of a specific plant will continue to grow exponentially each year. Rotating your crops, or taking a year off every few years, breaks the cycle of those insect populations. Historically, Jewish farmers were instructed to give a year of rest to their fields every seven years. This cultural behavior helped replenish the nutrients in the soil and would break the cycle of the destructive insects without having to use any pesticides.

## Inspect, Monitor and Prune Almost Daily

Every day things can occur that might affect the viability of your vegetables and fruit trees. To effectively manage your plants, you need to physically check the status of your plants almost daily. When you begin to see aphids or other plant damage, act quickly or you could lose the quality of your fruit. Often damage that is caused to the plants by insects is minor compared to the damage caused by a virus or other pathogens. Once activity is noted, trimming or pruning your plants can be an effective way at minimizing the insects or pathogens without having to rely on a lot of pesticides.

## Physically Blocking or Catching Pests

To protect your plants from rodents, birds and wildlife, you will have to use some sort of physical barrier around your garden. For birds and some wildlife, netting may be sufficient. With squirrels, mice or rats you might have to use ¼" galvanized screening and be willing to anchor it about 6 to 9 inches into the soil. Rodents can be extremely challenging as they can penetrate the screening if there are any gaps or if they are



able to climb over it. Apple bags physically protect apples from the codling moth, and outdoor sticky traps act as a monitoring tool that also reduce the population numbers of the insects.

## Use Targeted Applications of Pesticides

Using non-chemical techniques to protect your garden allows you to apply less pesticide in your garden while getting better results. When you do treat, focus the application where the insect is hiding (like under the leaves or near the roots) rather than doing a broadcast spray. In this way you are making your treatments more effective, using less pesticide overall, and minimizing the damage to the beneficial insect populations.

At Green City Pest Control our desire is to take the principles of Integrated Pest Management and incorporate that into protecting your home and family.

We believe that by understanding the biology and behavior of the rodents and insects and altering the environment to make it harder for them, we can target our applications and use significantly less pesticides while being even more effective at managing the pests.

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