

CONTROLLING MOSQUITOES AND WEST NILE VIRUS

With the appearance of West Nile Virus, mosquito control has become an important issue for homeowners. If you have any standing water or wet areas on your property, draining or thinning the areas to facilitate drying may reduce local populations.

If draining wet areas is not feasible or undesirable, two newer products will destroy the larvae. 1. Bti, or *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *israelensis* is a bacteria which only affects mosquito larvae. The other product is ALTOSID, which contains Methoprene. This is a juvenile growth hormone that prevents immature mosquitoes from emerging as biting adults. It may affect other insects, but is not considered a hazard to higher forms of life. ALTOSID is usually found in combination with other active ingredients.

Apply either of these products to standing water in mid to late May, which is just before the biting adults emerge. They may be purchased as granules, sprays, or disks that can be tossed into swampy areas that are otherwise hard to reach. Follow package directions and repeat the treatment as recommended. These products are most successful when used in combination with surface film such as AROSURF, which helps suffocate larvae and egg masses.

Check other parts of your property as well. Keep gutters clean and remove old tires, uncovered rain barrels, bottles, and any other container that may hold water. Empty wading pools and pet's water dishes daily.

Spraying or fogging chemicals provide short term control. If you target the first spray for Memorial Day, when the biting mosquitoes first become a problem, you will kill most of the first generation and there will be fewer to multiply. Fog at dusk and do not spray near large bodies of water.

Incidentally, one control device that does not work is the electric bug zapper. These devices use light to attract insects and mosquitoes are attracted to heat and carbon dioxide

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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