

# 10 Natural Ways to Control Pests in Your Vegetable Garden



In the quest for sustainability and eco-friendliness, gardeners are turning to natural methods to keep their backyard vegetable gardens thriving while maintaining the ecological balance. With the growing awareness of the harmful effects of synthetic pesticides, natural pest control has become a trending and vital aspect of home gardening. Here are 10 natural ways to control pests, ensuring your vegetables remain healthy and your garden flourishes.

## 1. Companion Planting



Companion planting is more than just a gardening trend; it's a strategic approach that involves planting certain plants together to naturally repel pests. For example, marigolds emit a scent that deters nematodes and tomato hornworms, making them perfect companions for tomatoes. Similarly, basil can repel flies and mosquitoes, enhancing the growth of plants like tomatoes and peppers. This method not only maximizes space but also promotes biodiversity, leading to a healthier garden ecosystem.

## **2. Encouraging Beneficial Insects**



Your garden can thrive by inviting beneficial insects that prey on harmful pests. Ladybugs, lacewings, and praying mantises are natural predators of aphids, mites, and other garden pests. Planting flowers such as daisies, sunflowers, and alyssum can attract these beneficial insects, providing a natural defense mechanism against pests and reducing the need for chemical interventions.

### **3. Neem Oil**



Extracted from the seeds of the neem tree, neem oil is a powerful, natural insecticide that disrupts the life cycle of pests without harming beneficial insects when used correctly. It's effective against a wide range of pests, including aphids, mites, and whiteflies. Applying a diluted neem oil solution to your plants can protect them from pest infestations and fungal diseases, making it a staple in the natural gardener's toolkit.

#### **4. Diatomaceous Earth**



Diatomaceous earth is a non-toxic powder made from fossilized algae. When sprinkled around plants, its microscopic sharp edges deter and eventually kill crawling pests like slugs and beetles without causing harm to humans or beneficial garden inhabitants. It's an effective, food-grade barrier against pests, but it must be reapplied after watering or rain.

## **5. Floating Row Covers**



Floating row covers made of lightweight fabric can be draped over plants, providing a physical barrier against pests like cabbage moths and carrot flies. These covers allow light and water to reach the plants while keeping pests out, promoting a healthy growth environment. They are handy for young plants and can be removed once the plants are strong enough to withstand pests.

## **6. Homemade Natural Sprays**



Creating your own natural pest repellents from common household ingredients can be both practical and environmentally friendly. A spray made from garlic, onion, or cayenne pepper mixed with water can deter a variety of pests. These natural concoctions can be sprayed directly onto plants to fend off pests without the risk of chemical buildup in the soil or on your vegetables.

## **7. Crop Rotation**



Rotating your crops annually is a simple yet effective strategy to prevent pests from becoming established in your garden. Many pests are plant-specific, so changing the location of crops each year can disrupt their life cycles and reduce their numbers. This practice also promotes soil health, reducing the likelihood of disease.

## **8. Hand Picking**





Sometimes, the simplest methods are the most effective. Regularly inspecting your plants and hand-picking off visible pests can be a straightforward way to control infestations. This method is time-consuming but ensures that beneficial insects are not harmed, maintaining the natural balance in your garden.

## **9. Soap Sprays**



Insecticidal soaps, made from a mild soap solution, can effectively control soft-bodied pests like aphids, spider mites, and whiteflies. They work by breaking down the pests' outer coating, leading to dehydration. These sprays are safe for the garden and can be applied directly to the pests without harming the plants.

## **10. Mulching**



Mulching not only helps retain soil moisture and regulate temperature but also can deter certain pests. Cedar bark mulch, for example, is known for its ability to repel ants and moths. A layer of mulch can also prevent weeds, reducing competition and the hiding spots for garden pests.

**You Can Control Pests the Natural Way!**



Adopting natural pest control methods is not only better for the environment but also for your health and the health of your garden. By implementing these strategies, you can enjoy a bountiful harvest from your backyard vegetable garden, secure in the knowledge that you're cultivating in harmony with nature. The transition to natural pest control is a step toward sustainable gardening practices that benefit not only our gardens but also the broader ecosystem.

### Read More

- [Gardening Supplies You Can Get at Dollar Tree](#)
- [Top 6 Gardening Knee Pads on Amazon](#)

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# Top 9 Common Plant Pests and How To Control Them



I have a friend who has a pest guy. She calls this guy every time that she finds a bug. Naturally, he's very helpful. However, hiring a pest control agency can be quite pricy. Therefore, it would be helpful for her to identify the most common plant pests and how to control them. In fact, it's good advice for all of us.

## **Top 9 Common Plant Pests and How To Control Them**

Notably, the most common plant pests can vary from region to region. This depends on a variety of factors, including:

- climate
- growing conditions
- types of plants grown in a given area
- impact of agriculture, urbanization and international trade on an area

For example, in regions with warm and humid climates, pests

such as spider mites and thrips may be more common. In contrast, pests such as scale insects and mealybugs may be more prevalent in colder regions.

Regardless of the region, however, some pests are more commonly encountered than others. Aphids and whiteflies are good examples. As such, it is important for indoor and outdoor growers alike to be aware of common plant pests and how to control them.

So, with that in mind, here are the nine most common plant pests and how to control them. I've tried to include the most effective ways to control them as well as some of the most inexpensive options.

## **Aphids**

Aphids are tiny insects that suck the sap from plant leaves. This causes the leaves to wilt and yellow. That is one of the most obvious signs that you might have aphids.

A simple and inexpensive way to control aphids is to make a DIY insecticidal soap using a mixture of water and dish soap. Alternatively, you can actually just use a strong stream of water to knock them off the plant when you see them.

## **Spider Mites**

Spider mites are tiny arachnids that also suck the sap from plant leaves.

A simple and inexpensive way to control spider mites is to regularly mist your plants with water to increase humidity, which can deter spider mites.

You can also use the same DIY insecticidal soap recommended for aphids to control spider mites.

## **Whiteflies**

Whiteflies are small, flying insects that are bad for many plants.

To control whiteflies, you can use that same insecticidal soap. You can also use neem oil for these or the aforementioned posts.

However, you might want to try stick traps for flying pests like whiteflies. You can make a cheap sticky trap using yellow index cards coated with petroleum jelly. Place around your plants and catch those whiteflies.

## **Mealybugs**

Mealybugs are soft-bodied insects that produce a white, waxy substance that protects them from predators. They, in turn, come after your plants.

An inexpensive way to control mealybugs is to dip a cotton swab in rubbing alcohol and use it to wipe off the bugs. This will kill them.

## **Scale Insects**

Scale insects are small, flat insects that attach themselves to plant leaves and stems.

Like with aphids, you can use insecticidal soap, neem oil, or a strong stream of water to knock them off of your plants. In fact, keep this tip in your back pocket as a go to for the most common plant pests and how to control them.

You might also control scale insects by using a toothbrush or cotton swab dipped in rubbing alcohol to remove them from your plants.

## Thrips

Thrips are tiny insects that feed on plant leaves, causing them to turn silver or bronze. If you see your plant leaves turning these unusual colors, then you should suspect thrips. They also spread plant diseases. Therefore, you want to get them under control quickly.

To control thrips, you can use insecticidal soap, neem oil, or sticky traps to catch them.

## Fungus Gnats

Fungus gnats are small flying insects that feed on plant roots and can cause root damage and plant wilting.

To control fungus gnats, you can use sticky traps. Alternatively, you might want to try using nematodes. These are microscopic worms that feed on fungus gnat larvae. Although they aren't useful for all of the most common pests and how to control them, they're great for this particular pest.

Another option is to let the soil dry out between watering, as fungus gnats prefer moist soil. Of course, whether or not this is good for your garden depends a lot on the plants you have. Some will obviously not like dry soil.

## Caterpillars

Caterpillars are the larvae of moths and butterflies. Notoriously, they can feed on plant leaves, causing significant damage.

To control caterpillars, you can use Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*), a natural bacteria that kills caterpillars.

Of course, you could also just handpick them off the plant and dispose of them.



# Snails and Slugs

Snails and slugs are mollusks that feed on plant leaves, leaving behind holes and chewed edges.

To control snails and slugs, you can use diatomaceous earth or copper tape to create a barrier around the plant.

Another effective and inexpensive way to control snails and slugs is to use [crushed eggshells or coffee grounds](#) around the base of the plant, as these materials create a barrier that snails and slugs won't cross. Whether or not this is effective is up for debate among gardeners. However, it's easy enough and cheap enough that it's worth a try.

## Preventing vs. Controlling Common Plant Pests

That last point about creating a barrier around your plants for snail control brings up a great point. There's pest control and then there's pest prevention. That would actually be a form of prevention. Obviously, prevention is better than developing a pest problem that you have to control.

[Pest prevention](#) also includes:

- regularly cleaning and sanitizing gardening tools and pots
- inspecting new plants for signs of pests or diseases before bringing them indoors
- avoiding over-fertilization or over-watering, which can weaken plants and make them more susceptible to pests.
- choosing pest-resistant plant varieties
- planting companion plants that deter pests
- using physical barriers such as row covers or netting to keep pests away from plants

Pest prevention is often the most effective and

environmentally-friendly approach. It obviously avoids the need for chemical interventions. However, even with good prevention practices in place, some pest problems may still arise. That's when you need to consider options to control them like those we've shared here.

## Read More:

- [How to Battle Garden Pests Cheaply and Naturally](#)
  - [Maintaining a Garden to Keep Your Indoors and Outdoors Clean](#)
  - [Frugal Ways to Clean and Disinfect Your Garden Tools](#)
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# How To Battle Garden Pests Cheaply and Naturally



Garden pests can be the bane of a home gardener's existence. You work so hard to get your plants to grow, then these bugs come along and destroy them. Are you looking for ways to battle garden pests cheaply and naturally? It's definitely possible!

## **It Doesn't Have To Be a Battle**

Yes, we often talk about battling pests. However, it's better if you start with a few mindset. Instead of thinking about how you're going to battle garden pests cheaply and naturally, try to reframe your thinking. It's not a war. It's not a fight. Instead, it's a challenge to establish equilibrium in your garden.

After all, your garden is part of nature. So are these bugs. So, even though you don't want them to destroy your plants, you can maintain an appreciation for them. You can respect their urge to go for your plants. As you build this compassion into your gardening, it becomes mentally easier to face the challenge of how to handle them in your garden.

## **How To Battle Garden Pests Cheaply and Naturally**

As you get ready to solve your pest problem, you want to focus on those two components: cost and natural pest repellants. You don't have to spend a lot of money to deter pests from getting into your garden. Moreover, you can do this naturally, which saves on costs and also treats your plants (and the pests) much more kindly.

## **5 Ways to Battle Garden Pests Cheaply and Naturally**

Here are five good options:

## 1. Plant The Right Flowers In Your Garden

Did you know that some [flowers](#) have natural pest-repellant qualities? Therefore, if you plant these in your garden, you easily deter pests from getting into everything. For example, marigolds are a good pest repellent. Other flowers [attract specific predators](#) that will naturally take care of various pests for you. For example, catmint attracts lacewing insects, which will then prey on aphids for you, protecting your plants.

## 2. Baking Soda Is a Natural Pesticide

You can kill certain garden pests, such as slugs, by pouring [baking soda](#) directly on them. Alternatively, make a spray solution with baking soda and water to use as a pesticide on various plants in your garden. This is an eco-friendly natural pesticide option that hardly costs anything.

## 3. Dish Soap Does The Job, Too

Did you know that the [dish soap](#) that you already use in your kitchen might also be a good pest repellent? Mix organic, natural non-bleach liquid dish soap with water. Spray this on your plants. It's a semi-natural and very affordable pesticide.

## 4. Make a Garlic Spray

If you want a pesticide that is even more natural than dish soap would be, then consider making a garlic spray. Puree garlic cloves, mix them with water, cayenne pepper, and a little bit of vegetable oil, then spray it on your plants.

## 5. Use Essential Oils

There are so many great [essential oils](#) that you can use to battle garden pests cheaply and naturally. Different pests will respond to different oils but start by trying rosemary, lavender, lemongrass, peppermint, spearmint, and orange

essential oils.

## Read More:

- [Ladybugs vs. Asian Ladybeetles](#)
  - [Reasons Why Tomato Foliage Curl](#)
  - [5 Factors That Affect Plant Growth](#)
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# 8 Uses of Baking Soda in Gardening



*8 USES OF BAKING SODA*

*in Gardening*

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Baking soda is one of the most amazing, affordable products available to us. Hopefully, you're already using baking soda for cleaning throughout your home. If not, then you're

spending more money than you should on household cleaners. And today let's talk about how baking soda's benefits don't stop there. There are so many uses of baking soda in gardening. Here are eight big ones:

## 1. Baking Soda for Soil Testing

Everything that you grow needs to grow in suitable soil. The soil's pH level is one of the most critical factors. Therefore, you should do [soil testing](#) before you plant. Baking soda provides an easy, cheap way to do that. Here's what to do:

- Take a tablespoon of soil and place it in a container.
- Add a little bit of distilled water until the soil is mud.
- Add a little bit of baking soda.
- Watch.
- Does the soil fizz? If so, then your soil has an acidic pH level.

Bonus tip: If the soil doesn't fizz with baking soda, then you should do a second test. Take a fresh tablespoon of the soil. Add distilled vinegar to it. If it fizzes now, then your soil has an alkaline pH level. However, if neither the baking soda nor the vinegar cause fizzing, then you have soil with neutral pH.

## 2. Boost Your Plant Fertilization

[Balcony Garden Web](#) has several great suggestions for using baking soda in gardening. For example, they suggest adding baking soda to fertilize slow-growing, dull-appearing plants. They say that you should mix one teaspoon of baking soda and Epsom salt with 1/2 teaspoon ammonia in one gallon of water. Then add approximately one quart of that solution to each plant you want to fertilize. You should see them grow faster and

brighter in no time.

### **3. Make Your Tomatoes Taste Better**

This is one of my favorite tips from Balcony Garden Web. They explain that if you simply sprinkle a little bit of baking soda around the base of your tomato plants, you'll be able to grow sweeter tomatoes. How is this possible? The soil absorbs the baking soda, lowering the natural acidity levels of the plant itself. Baking soda costs so little and yet it can work so much magic!

### **4. Get Rid of Garden Pests**

It's always so difficult to decide how to handle garden pests like worms and slugs. Some of them don't do that much damage and you might decide to leave them alone. Others, however, can wreak havoc in your garden. If you don't want to lose your plants, then you have to find some way to deal with them.

Baking soda can provide a solution. It's eco-friendly and generally kind to your plants. However, it works as a pesticide. You can put it directly on slugs and gnats to kill them. Alternatively, you can make a solution that you spray on your plants to keep pests away.

### **5. Uses of Baking Soda on Plant Leaves**

Did you know that if you have indoor household plants, you're supposed to clean them? That's right, household dust can settle on them and ruin them. A baking soda solution is a simple way to clean those leaves.

Even outdoors, though, you might find that baking soda helps the leaves of your plants. For example, a baking soda solution



can help prevent fungus growth on plant leaves.

## 6. Add Baking Soda to Cut Flowers

Do you grow flowers in your backyard garden? If so, then perhaps you sometimes cut them and put them in a vase for yourself or to gift to others. Make those flowers last as long as possible by adding just a little bit of baking soda to the water inside that vase.

## 7. Deodorize Compost

Hopefully, you have compost for your garden. It's such a waste if you don't. However, the smell of a compost pile might have deterred you. If that's the case, then baking soda can come to the rescue. Just sprinkle a little bit on top of the compost regularly. The smell will go away. You can then reap all the benefits of composting in your garden.

## 8. Cleaning Around the Garden

The plants are the most important part of your garden. However, they're not the only part. You have gardening tools, statues, chairs, etc. Make sure that you keep all of these things clean for the best garden experience. Baking soda makes a great natural cleaner for all of these.

### Read More:

- [100 Alternative Uses for Baking Soda](#)
  - [How to Use Baking Soda for Weed Control](#)
  - [How I Feel About the Hunting of Garden Pests](#)
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# How I Feel About the Hunting of Garden Pests



I've never had to deal with deer fussing about in my garden, but I have had plenty of squirrels, rabbits, raccoons, gophers, and cats use my raised beds as their very own buffet, walking path, and toilet. I'm speaking from my own limited experience here. But I've never felt comfortable with the idea of hunting garden [pests](#).

I used to live in a busy suburban neighborhood where the squirrels reigned supreme. Now, I live in a small community that borders rural land. There are more trees here and plenty of wildlife. Every year, I have to grapple with pests (insects and mammals, alike) enjoying my fresh produce as their own.

It's infuriating. All that effort gone when a squirrel decides to take a small chomp out of every bean [seedling](#). All that effort gone when birds get to seeds before they can even

sprout. All that effort gone when a rabbit chows down on my lettuce that I've managed to protect from early bolting. All that effort when a cat decides my garden beds are its personal litter box. All that effort when something – and I can't be sure what – decides to uproot whatever it wants in the middle of the night seemingly just for fun.

You'd think I'd be on board with hunting to get rid of garden pests, but I'm not. I recognize that hungry critters can really ruin the gardening season if they're relentless enough, but I have the same attitude towards animal pests as I do insect critters and weeds.

## **Taking up space**

We are in their space. Humans have taken up residence where once there was nothing but nature abound. It is not my right to delete these creatures to fit my idea of the perfect garden. Instead, I try my very best to work around the nuisance.

I have a different approach to an indoor invasion, granted, but that's mainly because indoor pests pose a more significant threat to household members' health and safety.

Outside, I'm not the boss. I try to work with Mother Nature, not against her. For one, I don't feel morally comfortable killing animals to make my life easier in the context of gardening. It's my hobby. While I try to grow plenty of food to eat and save money, I won't perish if a crop gets devoured by hungry creatures. I also think there are plenty of ways to co-exist peacefully with these so-called invaders. Hunting garden pests just isn't in the cards for me.

Pest covers have really helped me stay sane this year by keeping squirrels, birds, and cabbage moths away from my delicate brassica seedlings. They've been working so well I'm considering adding them to two more beds. Barriers should be

the first resort when dealing with nasty pests. I also grow extra lettuce to keep rabbits happy and out of my main beds. Most of my beds are high enough to keep small critters out, too.

Cats seem to trot whoever they please no matter what I do, but the pest covers have done wonders to keep their paws out of my beds. I even still plant catnip to invite them to visit because I enjoy the company of sweet, docile neighborhood kitties.

## **Breathe and reflect**

I am an impatient gardener, and even I can find a moment to take a deep breath and ask myself if getting worked up is worth it. Would it be easy to murder all the squirrels running around my plots? Absolutely! It wouldn't be psychologically simple, but it would really eliminate a big problem for me. Still, I don't think it's my right to say what belongs where.

I decided to enter the world of gardening, and I made a deal with myself that I would work with the forces of nature and not against them. Who am I to know what the consequences of my actions might be? Haven't we, as humans already made poor decisions in this regard? Pesticide use for pest control has decimated bee populations and is having important ramifications.

Yes, it's harder to take the long road. But a little effort is what it takes to grow a plant from seed in the first place. Surely, as gardeners, we have it in us to accept and handle a few extra roadblocks on our way to success.

If this kind of gardening philosophy appeals to you, I highly recommend reading Michael Pollan's book [\*Second Nature: A Gardener's Education\*](#). It's a book that changed the way I think about how I view so-called garden invaders.