

Organic Gardening

Why we care

Most gardeners have experienced the disappointment of losing plants to pests. Thankfully, there are a number of ways to reduce and prevent pest damage without synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. By not using pesticides, we protect beneficial insects, help keep local waterways clean, and avoid exposing our kids and ourselves to potentially harmful chemicals.

Simple, positive steps

- **Build your soil** by adding compost and manure, applying mulch to keep weeds down, and planting cover crops. [Click here](#) to see a list of organic fertilizers that can help restore nutrients.
- **Let nature do the work** by enticing beneficial insects and pest-eaters to your garden with plants that flower and fruit. Install nesting boxes for birds and bats. Some gardeners introduce ladybugs to eat aphids and spider mites, but they can be expensive and may not stick around.
- **Rotate your crops** to prevent soil diseases.
- **Got pests?** Aphids and spider mites can be dislodged with water sprays, soapy water, or insecticidal soap. Hand pick larger pests like cabbage worms. Place barriers around young plants to protect from cutworms. Slugs can be caught with a [beer trap](#).
- **Read labels.** Look for OMRI (Organic Materials Review Institute), a nonprofit that determines which products are allowed for use in organic production. If you do use a pesticide, use the smallest amount possible and follow instructions closely.
- **For more resources**, click the links below, or call Metro at 503-234-3000 to ask for a free copy:
 - [Natural Gardening Guide](#)
 - [Garden Insect Pests](#)
 - [Protecting Your Plants from Slugs](#)

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at jeanne@earthleaders.org.