

## NATURAL WAYS MAKE PESTS BUZZ OFF

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Amy Yarger enjoys her home-grown raspberries a little more since they are pesticide free at harvest time. One problem, birds love them, too. The Arvada resident drapes netting over the fruit so everyone can enjoy.

"We kind of eat what we want; let them (birds) have the rest," says Yarger.

Yarger doesn't worry about insect pests too much, but she uses natural prevention measures to control them.

Learning how to keep the yard pesticide-free might require extra effort, but a few simple steps help homeowners limit weeds and pests naturally. More people are finding ways to minimize chemical use, says Reagan Waskom, CSU water resource specialist.

Homeowners arming themselves with natural pest-management methods certainly require more persistence and perhaps greater tolerance of a not-so-perfect yard, Waskom says.

Previous years of drought have increased the awareness of water quality. And that may be the catalyst in helping some people forgo their affection to lawn and garden chemicals, Waskom says.

Although organic pesticides are considered safer for the environment than non-organic ones, Sarada Krishnan, the horticulture director at the Butterfly Pavilion, advises gardeners to spray with caution. She says even botanical pesticides like Pyrethrum, from the pyrethrum daisy, are laden with active ingredients potentially harmful to people and pets.

Non-organic chemicals are especially threatening, says Betty Jo Page, a member of Front Range Organic Gardening.

Commercial sprays kill off beneficial insects.

### Monitoring

Keep a watchful eye by monitoring diseased or insect-infested branches. Yarger prunes branches as needed to keep plants healthy.

Lisa Steiner can't stand a dandelion contrasted against her green lawn. The Englewood resident says she pulls each one out.

#### Location and grouping

Rotating annuals and vegetables yearly is a good practice, Krishnan says. Because many pests are plant family specific, removing the host is a simple prevention measure. She says "diseases and pests hibernate in the soil," but relocating plants prevents reinfestation.

Mix up plant varieties. This practice helps prevent population overload, and increases yields, Krishnan says.

#### Mulches

Adding mulch to beds slows weed growth, says Krishnan. What grows under a pine tree? Not much, she says. Acidic pine needles are a likely weed deterrent she says.

Gravel, wood chips and cocoa bean hulls also make ideal materials because they block light.

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