

# Organic Gardening

Using natural and organic products in the home landscape is not only environmentally friendly, but people/pet safe as well. Consider “going green” whenever you can, especially when it comes to edible gardening. Organic fertilizers last longer than others and add many micronutrients into the soil. There are a number of natural/organic solutions available for many common pests and diseases in our home landscapes. Remember to look for the labels “OMRI” (Organic Materials Review Institute) and “CDFA” (California Department of Food and Agriculture) – these are the highest standards of organic registration in the USA. If you want to go strictly 100% organic, search for these labels. In addition to these registered products, there are a number of “natural” products available that are people/pet safe as well. Some companies choose not to go through the certification process and pay all the registration costs, and therefore denote their products as “natural” or “for use in organic gardening”. Either way the point is this, utilize naturally derived products and avoid use of toxic chemicals and systemics.

**E.B. Stone products:** Sunnyside is proud to offer a full line of E.B. Stone Organics products – the highest level of quality when it comes to soils, fertilizers, and amendments. Check out our selection - we have the perfect organic food/soil for every gardening need. These are all registered “CDFA”.

**Espoma products:** We supplement our line of E.B Stone products with some useful Espoma Organic items. They offer a full range of easy-to-use, water soluble fertilizers for indoor and outdoor use. They also provide excellent houseplant potting mixes and organic ‘Lightning Lime’ for the lawn and vegetable garden.

**Down to Earth products:** We carry a few Down to Earth items, mainly amendments for the vegetable garden. Their ‘Oyster Shell Lime’ is excellent for sweetening veggie soils, and ‘Azomite’ is one of the magic organic products for vegetables that makes the flavor of home-grown veggies pop. We also stock their ‘Vegan’ blend, for those that want no animal additives in their fertilizer.

**Organic Veggie/Herbs starts:** We strive to get all organic vegetable and herb starts, but always check with our staff on which ones are certified. In the store, we have a number of organic seeds - some from **Ed Hume** and some from **Botanical Interest**.

## Weed control

‘**Corn Gluten**’ – A certified organic pre-emergent herbicide/fertilizer. Works for a season, when applied to weed free areas - just be careful not to try to seed things after application.

‘**Captain Jack’s Lawnweed Brew**’ (formerly known as **Weed Beater FE**) from Bonide – This is a “natural” selective product and safer alternative than synthetic lawn weed killers. It is iron-based and will kill most broadleaved weeds without harming the surrounding turf, and it helps with moss control as well!

**'Captain Jack's Deadweed Brew' (formerly known as Kleen Up Botanical)** from Bonide – A new formulation from Bonide that is a “natural”, non-selective weed killer. This is listed safe for veggie gardens and works well in driveways/gravel/patios/etc. as well.

**Other options** – Try removing them manually with a good tool, like the Hula-Ho. Perhaps consider a propane torch for areas in gravel and driveways – but be careful not to burn everything. Sometimes newspaper/cardboard/burlap makes a good weed cover for a period of time as well.

## **Moss Control**

**'Moss Maxx Liquid'** from Bonide – This is a “natural” Potassium Soap based product that is great on mosses, especially in the turf. It is also safe to apply to hard surfaces and will not stain. Over dormant season (winter only), it can be used to spray lichens/mosses/algae in deciduous trees and shrubs as well.

## **Slug Control**

**Iron Phosphate** is the go-to organic slug control. It is packaged in a number of products – look for the **'Sluggo'** brand from Monterrey, or **'Bug/Slug control'** from Bonide (contains **Spinosad** as well for broader use). The new **'Sluggo Maxx'** is even better – three times the coverage due to superior attractants.

**'Diatomaceous Earth'** is another great organic option. It is useful for slugs as well as ants, fleas, and many other crawling insects and can be used anywhere in the garden – completely people and animal safe.

## **Mole Control**

**'Mole Max' from Bonide** – Natural Castor Oil encapsulated on a small clay particle. Works great at repelling moles out of the turf and garden areas. Find active runs and cover one third of yard, moving out another third for the following two weeks. If you cover your property, they will stay as they have nowhere to escape the smell.

**Mole Max spikes** – Battery operated spikes from Bonide that exude chattering sounds into the soil - these are good at deterring moles. One spike covers up to 10,000 square feet.

**Traps** – Red in the face, ready for battle and want to avoid poisons/gassers/etc? Then trap the little vermin with a good old fashioned cinch trap.

## **Insect and Disease Control**

Going green with insect and disease control is possible, the key is keeping up with problems and being pro-active! Always read labels carefully and follow the instructions. The most important thing is to repeat sprays at the recommended intervals – many will kill only adult insects, for example, but a second or even third application at proper intervals will get the eggs and larvae, which means you win the battle!

**'Monterrey Horticultural Oil'** – A certified organic oil is useful as a dormant spray in winter, as well as a maintenance spray for use in-season, as long it is not 90 degree weather (it will burn in the heat). Good for controlling many insects by smothering/cutting off oxygen to them.

**'Captain Jack's Deadbug Brew'** from Bonide is excellent for many uses in the garden – it contains Spinosad and is available in liquid and dust form. Very useful for in-ground insects, the veggie garden, and all over the landscape where needed. If timing is right, it even works on hard to control creatures like borers, scales, and leafminers.

**Apple Maggots** – Utilize maggot traps and lures to catch those pesky flies before they get into your apples. Use biodegradable sticky glue on the outside of traps – all totally non-toxic. Another option is Maggot Barriers – wrap all your little apples with their own protective cover each spring so flies cannot get to them! We also now have some traps from Pest Wizard that can be hung out in the fruit/berry garden, which will attract and trap a number of fruit flies.

**'Revitalize' from Bonide** – A fabulous all-purpose, bio-fungicide for use on just about anything in the garden – edibles, lawns, roses, shrubs, everything! Think fungus-eating bacteria – the Bacillus specie in the solution will prevent almost all diseases from taking hold. Great as preventive in spring and when used at intervals throughout the season.

**Root Weevils** – Want to organically get rid of those little soil creatures that crawl up at night and bite the edges of your Rhododendrons and other broadleaved plants? Catch them at night with a flashlight, or use **Tanglefoot** smeared on a wrap surrounding your trunks, creating a sticky barrier they cannot crawl through.

**Caterpillars** – Always go straight to the natural **'BT'** from Bonide– a superior caterpillar killer that is safe and non-toxic. They ingest the bacteria in the solution, get sick to their stomach, and cease to feast on the remainder of your landscape. You win again without harming anything.

**'Neem Oil'** (or 'Rose Rx' from Bonide) – A useful organic/natural spray that controls both insects and diseases, when used properly. A great product to have around if you want to go green, one the most versatile in the garden. There is also supercharged **'Bon-Neem'** from Bonide, 'Neem Oil' with an additional touch of Pyrethrin and Piperonyl Butoxide – both organic compounds. **Neem Max** from Bonide is another newer option, which is processed differently and has 70% concentration in the bottle - this will go a long way if you use Neem frequently.

**'Insecticidal Super Soap' from Bonide** – Another traditional natural/organic spray from Bonide that combines Spinosad (mentioned above) and simple Potassium Salts of Fatty Acids. Very effective on a wide range of insects, especially when used regularly.

## **Beneficial Insects**

**Ladybugs** – These classic bug-eating insects are a fun and easy way to add some natural predators to the landscape. They are held dormant/refrigerated and can be purchased in

spring and simply released into the garden to help with insect control. You can also find ladybug lures and even houses around as well.

**Nematodes** - These soil dwellers are useful to control things we do not want in our ground, like root weevil and crane fly for example. They can be added to the soil structure once the weather warms up and they will last the season. With winter temps rising, I personally think we are now able to have these live year to year in our soil and not have to replace them every season.

You are welcome to explore other options online as well, such as Praying Mantis, Lacewings, and Predatory Mites.

## **Composting**

There is an incredible amount of information online regarding composting and your various options as a home gardener. Lots to consider with this topic – what goes in, what additives will help speed the process up, and of course what to do with what comes out. Lots of beneficial insects will help – even consider locating some composting worms. The key is finding the right “green” to “brown” ratio, which is the same as talking “Nitrogen” to “Carbon” ratio. Greens are fresh material, like grass clippings, food scraps, coffee grounds and such. Browns are dead material, like old leaves, twigs, paper, etc. Ideally you want to find close to a 25 to 1 ratio of Carbon versus Nitrogen. Consider what some call “Cold/Passive Composting” or “Hot/Active Composting” – these two methods will dictate how much work you put into it and how quickly things will degrade. I would always recommend checking temperature, adding compost maker, and monitoring moisture as well. Again, look online as there are numerous ways to do this. Consider adding a compost pile, or certainly taking advantage of the yard waste programs set up by almost all municipalities these days. Recycling material and adding nutrient rich compost to the garden is a wonderful thing!