

the best

The Best Pesticides

BY JUDY WEIGHTMAN

Most of us are concerned about using insecticides, even those made from natural products, and want to avoid using anything more potent than is actually needed. Here are seven great products, listed in order from least toxic to most toxic. All are suitable for use in the home garden.

petrochemical, so there are no negative effects on people or wildlife, and no long-term effects on beneficial insects or the environment.

3. No-Squito!™ Mosquito Bioinsecticide

No-Squito! targets only one insect, but it's a troubling one — the mosquito.

What is Bt?

Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt) is a live microorganism that is toxic to certain insects in their larval form, including caterpillars and grubs. There are several different strains of Bt, and each affects only a targeted group of insects. In general, the bacterium reacts in the larva's gut, paralyzing the digestive system and thereby starving the insect.

This biting pest is not only annoying, it can also transmit disease, both to humans (West Nile virus) and to animals (heartworm disease). The *Bt israelensis* in No-Squito! destroys mosquito larvae in standing water, including ponds, fountains, and birdbaths, as well as roof gutters and rain barrels. The Bt will not harm people, pets, or any wildlife (including fish and amphibians) living in or around your pond.

4. Green Step™ Caterpillar Control

This liquid Bt concentrate controls caterpillars, including cabbage loopers and cabbageworms (which target all cole crops, including broccoli, cauliflower, and kale); corn earworms; cutworms; and European corn borers. You need to hit the insects before they bore into affected plants and start feeding there, so Green Step works best when you apply it early and follow up regularly.

5. Bulls-Eye™ Bioinsecticide

Like Green Step and No-Squito!, Bulls-Eye uses bacteria that target specific pests. Unlike the Bt in those products, however, these bacteria (*Saccharopolyspora spinosa*) are fermented, which creates a product that paralyzes the insect's nervous system, killing it far



1. Surround® At Home® Crop Protectant

This product doesn't kill insects; instead, it protects plants by covering them with a barrier film that makes the insects so uncomfortable that they move on quickly to less inhospitable locales. The film contains kaolin, a super-fine clay (also used in making porcelain), which creates a gritty surface that repels many kinds of beetles, including Japanese beetles and cucumber beetles. It also blocks the light that can cause sunburn in fruits and vegetables.

2. Oil-Away™ Supreme Insecticidal Spray

This product does kill insects, but not by poisoning them. Instead, it suffocates pests (including aphids, whiteflies, and mealybugs) — and pests cannot develop a resistance to it. Oil-Away Supreme is made from cottonseed oil, not from a



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Resources

All of these products are available from Member Company **Gardens Alive!**® Visit them online at www.GardensAlive.com or call 513-354-1482 for a free catalog.

more quickly — in as little as an hour. Bulls-Eye can help control not just caterpillars but also Colorado potato beetles, gypsy moth larvae, leaf miners, thrips, webworms, and even fire ants. It **does not** affect beneficial insects like lady beetles and lacewings.

6. Pyola® Insect Spray

Pyola consists of a canola base that is infused with pyrethrins, insecticides that

come from pungent chrysanthemum flowers. This combination creates a spray that can be used either as a dormant spray or during the growing season, and that will destroy insects at all stages of their life cycle, including eggs. The insects that Pyola controls include many kinds of beetles (including Japanese beetles), aphids, ants, caterpillars (including gypsy moths and tent caterpillars), mealybugs, and thrips. The effects of the spray can last for several days, deterring insects from laying more eggs, but the spray doesn't persist in the environment. It can be used on fruits and vegetables, plus on trees, shrubs, and even houseplants. It is, however, toxic to fish, so should not be used around ponds.

7. Liquid Rotenone/Pyrethrin

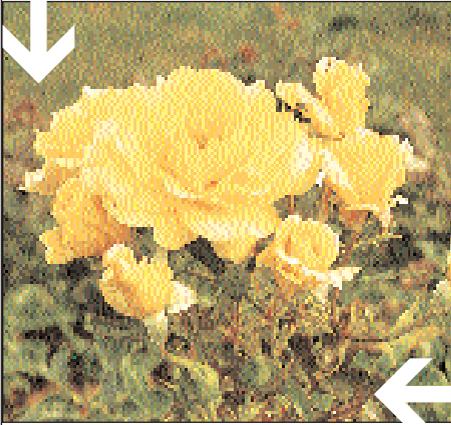
This is a combination of pyrethrin, the active ingredient in Pyola, with rotenone, a natural insecticide derived from the roots of several tropical plants, mostly those of the *Derris* and

Lonchocarpus families. Rotenone is toxic to many kinds of beetles and caterpillars, but it is also toxic to beneficial insects and to fish, so it should be used only as a last resort. Use it only at the directed rates and follow all label instructions carefully. If it is used, it tends to degrade to nontoxic levels within a few days.

Knowing how powerful each of these products is, you can choose those that will battle the pests that plague you, and yet not be any more toxic than needed to get the job done. ✿

For more information

See pages 28-31 for an overview of kinds of insect pests, along with suggestions for products that can help combat them.



Stop caterpillars, like this imported cabbageworm, from destroying crops, trees, and ornamental plants.

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