



In General

This booklet includes practical, how-to information about several aspects of natural landscape care. To begin, here are a few general factors and tips to consider.



- *Soil.* The best way to avoid needing pesticides is to have healthy, unstressed plants (including grass), which starts with healthy soil. Healthy plants are stronger and more resistant to pests. Make sure that your soil is providing what your lawn and garden plants need – *please see the Soil section, p. 5.*
- *Plant location.* Consider if your plants are in an environment where they will grow best - i.e. whether they prefer sun or shade, can handle salt from the sea, etc. When plants are struggling to adapt to unnatural conditions, the strains on them make them more vulnerable to diseases.
- *Product labels.* Read the labels for products being used on your property and what chemicals they contain. By Federal law, manufacturers must indicate if a product is potentially harmful to humans and wildlife (although mention of long-term health problems caused by pesticides is not required).
- *First steps.* Always consider what you can do before using natural pesticides:
 - > Quite a few pests such as lily beetles, tomato horn worm, Japanese beetles, and aphids are best attacked by hand. Pick them off and either squish them or throw them in a bucket of sudsy water (some gardeners add a couple of drops of neem oil or household ammonia).
 - > In the fall, removing plant material that has been infected by harmful bacteria, fungus, and some pests from the garden can make a big difference. These pests can overwinter in the plant and the soil, reappearing in the spring.
 - > Make sure there is good airflow through your garden by removing lower and fallen plant material.
 - > A light weight fabric row cover such as Agribon can help to prevent harmful bacteria, fungus, and some pests from moving in.
- *Unintended consequences.* Even organic pesticides kill a range of insects, including beneficials like pollinators. For example, a natural insecticide used for ticks will likely kill other species. Bees are a major concern, but there are many other little creatures living in and around our gardens that help control pests. Fungicides such as MilStop, for instance, can negatively affect the microorganisms and good fungus in the soil.

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- *Outdoor lights.* About half of the millions of insect species on Earth are nocturnal, and electric lights can have a negative impact on their life cycles. Use yellow-hued LED bulbs rather than white incandescent ones, and when possible, turn off outdoor lights. *See the Commercial Suppliers section, p. 21.*
- *Be aware.* Natural methods take more applications and more attention than conventional chemical treatments.