

## Organic Recipes for Success

*by Michael Timm*

As gardeners, we all have to deal with the maladies associated with gardening. No matter how hard we try, there is always some bug, disease, or weed that becomes our nemesis throughout the growing season. With the increasing concern over the amount of inorganic chemicals being used, and their effect on our overall environment, many people are turning to organic controls. Although there are plenty of organic controls available in the marketplace, there are some good homemade recipes you may want to try first. I have found these recipes to work quite well. Many of the organic recipes contain products that are already in our possession.

There has never been a year when I have not had to deal with some type of hungry bug in my garden. If you're dealing with soft bodied insects, like aphids, a homemade insecticidal soap works well. Mix 1 to 3 teaspoon of household soap, not detergent, per gallon of water. Use soft water, if possible, it contains less heavy metals, and it is safer on your plants. Shake well and spray entire plant. This works as a contact killer, so it needs to hit the insect itself to work.

If you're dealing with chewing insects, like beetles or caterpillars, try using garlic oil or hot pepper spray. These work as deterrents, making the plants less tasty, and causing the insects to move on. To make the garlic oil, finely chop 10-15 garlic cloves and soak them in 1 pint of mineral oil for 24 hours. Strain and spray the mixture as it is. If the mixture is too thick, dilute it with a little water. Add a few drops of soap to the mixture so it will adhere more easily to the leaves.

To make the hot pepper spray, blend ½ cup of hot peppers with 2 cups of water. Simply strain and spray the mixture. Be careful when handling the hot pepper mixture as it can irritate your skin and eyes. I have actually found that the hottest peppers, work the best!

Disease is another problem we frequently deal with. Fungal diseases are one of our biggest culprits in the garden. These fungal diseases range from powdery mildew on our garden phlox to blight on our tomatoes.

Garlic to the rescue again! Garlic appears to be a fungicide as well as an insecticide. Mix 5 to 10 cloves with 1 pint of water, in a blender. Strain the mix and spray it on.

Another good spray that works against fungus, is a baking soda mixture. Baking soda prevents fungal spores from establishing themselves on plants and may even prevent established fungi from continuing to develop.

Simply dissolve 1 teaspoon of baking soda, and a few drops of liquid soap, in 2 quarts of water. This recipe has been around for a long time and works very well.

Lastly, weeds are another common pest we must combat. Although there aren't a lot of organic controls for perennial weeds, there are some good options for annual weeds. Most remedies will kill the top growth of perennial weeds, but they eventually grow back from the roots.

Vinegar and salt have been traditionally used by organic gardeners to subdue annual weeds. However, these substances can affect soil balance, and may even harm your other plants, if careless. These do work great for eliminating annual weeds in sidewalk cracks and in other areas that you want nothing to grow in. Although, very labor intensive, it is still best to hand pull weeds.

If you are dealing with some of these problems in your own landscapes, try some of these organic approaches. Remember, not all remedies work the same for everyone. It may take some trial and error to find the ones that work best for you. When you find one that works, it is not only very cost effective, but environmentally friendly as well. Happy Gardening!