Control common garden pests

- An easy-to-follow guide to achieving a perfect result.
- Outlines all the tools you will need for the job.
- Includes a materials checklist.

PLEASE NOTE:
Before starting this project or buying any materials, it is worth your time to read all steps thoroughly first to be sure you understand what is required.

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Identifying and controlling garden pests – with a little help from Mitre 10.

All dedicated gardeners no doubt long for a garden free of pests so that carefully nurtured flowers bloom big and beautiful, and vegetables reach the table plump and without blemish. But, alas, it is not nature’s way.

Many organisms, such as fungi and insects, live happily on and in our plants and are actually an important part of the garden environment. Under natural conditions they are controlled by their own natural predators, providing food for birds, animals and other insects, and helping to break down organic matter that feeds the plants.

It is only when some organisms reproduce and grow in numbers far beyond the natural balance that they become a pest and damage the very plants they depend on and which we cherish.

That’s where this MitrePlan can help by enabling you to more easily identify and treat a range of pest problems.

Step 1: Identify your problem

Flowers, foliage stems and roots can all be affected by some pest, reducing crop size, quality and the vigour of the plants. The plant may even die if the problem is too severe. And simply buying an all-purpose spray when you don’t really know whether it will do the job will not only cost you money but may harm the environment.

So the first, and most important step is to identify the problem. Pests on plants display recognisable symptoms, just as humans do when we get sick. With a little investigative work, using a hand lens or magnifying glass if required, you can usually identify most common pests.

There are two main kinds of pests to worry about:

Chewing Insects are probably the easiest to identify, leaving large holes and severe damage to the leaves and stems of plants. Complete defoliation is common. Many of these pests are to be found hanging around or hidden close to the damaged plant, particularly at night. They include borers, caterpillars, snails, slugs, fruit fly and grass hoppers.

Piercing and Sucking Insects cause less noticeable damage. Their long straw-like mouth allows them to penetrate the plants and suck out the juices. So check plants regularly – the usual signs of attack from these insects are discoloration or deformity of plant parts, particularly leaves and new growth. Look for bugs, aphids, mealy bugs, scale, thrips and lice.

The spider mite, although technically not an insect, is also in this group.

But insects may not be your problem. Like people, plants are also prone to a variety of diseases which can cause damage to leaves, stems and roots. So if no insects can be found, check the affected plant for evidence of a fluffy or powdery deposit under which they hide. A variety of news tips.

FRONT COVER:

Webbing Caterpillar.

This fellow protects himself inside a mass of web and droppings. Best control is to pull the web out by hand and squash the caterpillar between the fingers. This is probably a job for gloves!

Verbal quotes are indicative only. Written quotes on materials are available upon request from your Mitre 10 store.

Safety Rules for Chemical Use

1. Always read the label.
2. Always follow safety precautions on the label.
3. Always use the recommended rates for the purpose.
4. Always mix only the amount needed for the job to prevent unnecessary disposal of the chemical.
5. Always store chemicals in a safe place away from children.
6. Always dispose of chemicals and containers properly.
7. Always spray on calm days.
8. Always use protective equipment.
9. Always clean spray equipment and protective equipment after use.

Insecticides

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Hand lens or Magnifying glass
Self-seal plastic bags
Secateurs
Protective clothing
Spray equipment
Chemical measuring glass
Garden hose & fittings

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Step 2: Assess the problem
Once you’ve identified the problem, the next step is to decide just how bad it is. Consider whether it is a mild or severe infestation. If only mild, there may be no need to take any action at all and you simply let nature take its course. On the other hand, if it appears bad with the possibility of it spreading to other plants, then control measures need to be taken.

Step 3: Control the problem
Prevention is the best strategy. Each pest can be controlled using good, simple cultural techniques, such as encouraging natural predators like birds, increasing drainage, and keeping plants properly fed and watered to reduce their susceptibility to attack. But even this may not be enough and stronger methods must be used.

In controlling the problem, consider using the least hazardous method possible to achieve results. Many of the old methods are still useful, such as hosing off offending insects, picking off pests by hand, inspecting the plants at night to catch slugs and snails, or capturing nocturnal insects in traps when they look for hiding places early in the morning. Consider also experimenting with herbs grown with other plants to deter pests (refer MitrePlan #50 Plant a healthy vegetable garden). This is known as “Companion Planting”.

Chemical treatments today make control in the garden a lot easier. A range of chemical insecticides are available which either control one particular insect or group of insects, or more than one. For general garden use, multi-purpose sprays are convenient, but check the label before you buy – no insecticide will control every pest. Look for sprays low in toxicity, such as those made from plant extracts of pyrethrum, eucalyptus, garlic, etc. Remember, rain or watering will wash off any residue from the plants, so frequent application may be necessary with these sprays.

Step 4: Check results
After treating, check your plants regularly. Watch for any re-occurrence that may need to be treated again before it becomes a problem. Be sure to let your first spray have enough time to work – the chemical label will recommend the time before re-spraying.

There is also a wide variety of spraying equipment on the market and your choice will depend on the size of your garden and your plants (Fig. 1.)
MIGHTY HELPFUL HINTS TO MAKE THE JOB EASIER

- To prevent re-spraying too soon, record the date of the first spray on your calender.
- Snails can be killed using beer in a small container where they are attracted and drown.
- Prevent mistakes by keeping spray equipment separate from fertiliser sprayers and herbicide sprayers.
- For small spray jobs, use an old window cleaner spray bottle. Clean thoroughly before use.
- When mixing powder chemicals, mix in a small amount of water first, then add the balance of water and mix thoroughly.
- If you can’t diagnose the problem, get a second opinion – take a sample sealed in a clear plastic bag to your Mitre 10 store for help.

IMPORTANT:
Not all Mitre 10 stores have a garden centre.

Mitre 10 gratefully acknowledges the assistance of:
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MIGHTY HELPFUL TOOLS FOR YOUR MITREPLAN

- Hand lens or magnifying glass
- Self-seal plastic bags
- Secateurs
- Protective clothing
- Spray equipment
- Chemical measuring glass
- Garden hose & fittings

Visit mitre10.com.au for more

ORDER
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MIGHTY HELPFUL CHECKLIST

✓ Safety Rules for Chemical use
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  3. Always use the recommended rates for the purpose.
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  5. Always store chemicals in a safe place away from children.
  6. Always dispose of chemicals and containers properly. Check your local council for advice.
  7. Always spray on calm days.
  8. Always use protective equipment.
  9. Always clean spray equipment and protective equipment after use.

IMPORTANT: This project planner has been produced to provide basic information and our experienced staff are available to answer any questions you may have. However, this information is provided for use on the understanding that Mitre 10 is not liable for any loss or damage which is suffered or incurred (including but not limited to indirect or consequential loss), for any personal injury or damage to property suffered or sustained as a result of using the information contained in this MitrePlan Project Planner. Mitre 10 advises you to call in a qualified tradesperson, such as an electrician or plumber, where expert services are required, and to independently assess any safety precautions that will need to be followed prior to using the information in this MitrePlan Project Planner.

WARNING: There may be by laws or regulations of councils or other statutory bodies that you must comply with when following this MitrePlan Project Planner.

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