



Choosing an environmentally friendly pest control method

Gardeners who choose organic and traditional gardening and landscape principles follow the objectives of Earth-Kind® landscaping. This helps create a horticultural system that is based on real-world effectiveness and environmentally responsible actions.

As most gardeners know, gardening pests are either friend or foe. The first step gardeners need to take is to determine which type of pest they're finding in the garden. If they find the foe variety nestled in among the plants gardeners will need to determine how and when to treat them so the beneficial insects continue to hang around.

Correct identification of all insects in the garden is important. That information will help determine a control method. This means gardeners will need to do frequent inspections and monitoring of garden crops. While complete elimination of pests isn't feasible, the goal is to lower the number of pests to a manageable level.

Gardeners who can't diagnose the problem themselves can get help from the local Oklahoma State University Extension office. Extension educators have publications with pictures of the pests and the damage they cause. If necessary, the educator can also provide information on how to select, prepare and send specimens to OSU entomologists or pathologists for identification of insects or diseases.

Once the pests have been properly identified, use all available cultural and mechanical pest control measures first, which may include hand-picking and destroying insects.

It's best to avoid using any insecticide when only minor damage is evident, and an action threshold hasn't been reached. This is the point when it's less expensive to use an insect control method than to endure damage to the plants.

Typically, a few grasshoppers nibbling on the plants or the discovery of a few white grubs in the soil aren't serious enough problems to justify the use of insecticides.

If the threshold level is reached, gardeners should choose the method that has been proven by research to be the safest and most effective. Gardeners may want to do spot-treating in the areas where pests are found as opposed to a blanket treatment.

It's important to avoid the improper use of insecticides. Avoid using an insecticide on a problem that is caused by a fungus or bacterium.

For more information on Earth-Kind® Gardening and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques, see OSU Extension Fact Sheets - [HLA-6431 Earth-Kind Gardening Series: Cultural Control Practices](#), [HLA-6432 Earth-Kind Gardening Series: Mechanical Pest Controls](#), [HLA-6433 Earth-Kind Gardening Series: Botanical Pest Controls](#), [HLA-6434 Earth-Kind Gardening Series: Biological Pest Controls](#).