

# Mosquitos

**04. 18.2017**

**Q:** I am excited to get out in the yard and start gardening but I am being eaten alive by mosquitos. Do you have any suggestions for how to control them? Ants can damage fruit, and they also protect aphids living in the trees.

**A:** We have had a long wet winter this year. Now that the rains are subsiding, this is time to think about mosquito control. There are many species of mosquitoes; most do not pose a problem to humans or our pets but a few mosquito species do pose a serious threat. More than 50 species of mosquitoes occur in California, with habitats ranging from deserts at or below sea level to mountain meadows with elevations of 10,000 feet or higher. Many of these species are relatively uncommon and seldom pose a threat to human health or well-being.

The few species of mosquitos that cause serious health issues such as West Nile Virus in humans and heart worm in dogs like to breed in stagnant water. Only female mosquitoes suck blood; the males live on nectar. Female mosquitoes lay their eggs in stagnant or very still water so it is very important to make sure all possible breeding areas such as buckets, pots and old tires are drained. Check tree crotches and fill them with dirt or water absorbent material if they contain water; empty bird baths and refill them daily. Even small containers such as soda cans,

glass jars, flower pot saucers, or tree holes can provide a habitat for mosquito development.

The most effective control methods are those that kill the mosquito in the larval stage of the life cycle. Keep in mind adult mosquitoes can fly several miles from where they develop. Even successful control of mosquito larvae on your premises might not result in eliminating mosquito numbers or biting activity.

Besides eliminating places that might hold stagnate water don't forget to place some mosquito fish in animal troughs so the fish will eat the larvae. Do make sure to prevent these fish from entering any waterways as they may become invasive.

You can also use the mosquito control rings contain *Bt israelensis*, a naturally occurring bacterium that kills mosquito larvae for a full 30 days. They are slow-release, floating Control Ring that will kill larva in your pond or water garden.

Most mosquito bites occur at dawn or dusk; if you need to be outside during these times wear long sleeved shirts and long pants and if there are a lot of insects around, it may be necessary to spray your clothing with a mosquito repellent.

Lastly, check the screens on the windows of your home to ensure they are snug and have no holes that the mosquito can get through.

For more information about Mosquitos and ways to control them around your home check out the pest note for mosquitos at the UC IPM web page.

<http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7451.html#MANAGEMENT>

The Shasta Master Gardener are back at the Saturday Certified Farmers Market so stop by with your questions. We will also have a booth at the Whole Earth and Watershed Festival this weekend and will be giving away free tomato and pepper plants.