

MOSQUITOES: PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR HOMEOWNERS

Lifted from an article by M.F. Potter, Lee Townsend and F.W. Knap and McHenry Co. Department of Health pamphlet Mosquitoes: Questions and Answers.

Two major groups of mosquitoes reside in our area- Culex and Aedes. They have somewhat different egg-laying habits. Culex mosquitoes lay groups of eggs on the surface of water in rain barrels, bird baths, tin cans, old tires, cisterns, roof gutters and any other containers which hold water. Aedes mosquitoes place their eggs at the base of vegetation in low lying areas that flood periodically. However, they also can deposit their eggs above the water line in artificial containers or in tree holes that hold water. These eggs will hatch when inundated with rain water.

Unfortunately, there is no easy solution for managing mosquitoes. Countless products on the market claim to be effective and easy to use but few have appreciable value in lessening the annoyance and incidence of bites. The most effective way to reduce the number of mosquitoes around homes and neighborhoods is to find and eliminate their breeding sites—standing water. Adults of some mosquito species remain near their breeding site (Culex) Others can travel long distances and because of this, problem mosquitoes may come from breeding sites some distance away. The Village of Port Barrington applies larvicides regularly to storm sewers and catch basins as recommended by McHenry Co. Health Department. Floodwater areas are also treated as needed. Retention ponds are monitored and treated if mosquito larva are present. Barrier sprays are done prior to Village events as they are temporary—lasting only a day or two depending on wind and rain conditions.

There are effective steps that **individuals** can take to minimize mosquito breeding on their property.

Reduce mosquito breeding sites by:

1. Dispose of old tires, buckets, aluminum cans plastic sheeting or other refuse that can hold water. Empty accumulated water from trash cans, boats, wheel barrows, pet dishes and flower pot bottoms. If possible, turn these items over when they are not in use.
2. Clean debris from rain gutters and unclog obstructed downspouts. Clogged rain gutters are one of the most overlooked breeding sites for mosquitoes around homes. Remove any standing water on flat roofs or around structures. Repair leaking faucets and air conditioners that produce puddles for several days.
3. Change water in birdbaths and wading pools at least once a week and keep swimming pools cleaned. Ornamental pools can be aerated and/or stocked with mosquito-eating fish. Aeration / water movement helps deter egg laying.
4. Fill tree holes and stumps with sand to prevent accumulation of water.
5. Irrigate lawns and gardens carefully to prevent standing water.

Protect yourself by:

1. Avoiding the outside during peak feeding times—just before and after dusk and just before dawn.
2. Wear light colored, tightly woven clothing and keep trouser legs tucked into boots or socks.
3. Use mosquito netting to protect young infants
4. Apply mosquito repellent to clothes and always follow label directions. Wash your hands before eating and after applying repellent.

Other possibilities:

Do “**bug zappers**” work?

No, bug electrocutors are ineffective in controlling biting mosquitoes. “Bug zappers” have an ultraviolet or “black light” that is supposed to attract mosquitoes. Studies indicate that mosquitoes make up only a tiny percentage of the insects killed in such traps. The majority are moths, beetles, and other harmless night flying insects, some of which may actually be beneficial to your garden. Also, the zapping sounds may be annoying to your neighbors.

What about **carbon dioxide-or fan-type traps**?

Mosquitoes are attracted to humans and mammals as they exhale carbon dioxide. Some traps use Co2 as attractants. Such devices seldom have been shown to reduce populations of biting mosquitoes on a property. In some situations, they could even attract more mosquitoes into the area one is hoping to protect.