

## Organic Gardening

### Why we care

Most gardeners have experienced the disappointment of losing plants to pests. Thankfully, there are a number of ways to reduce and prevent pest damage without synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. By not using pesticides, we protect beneficial insects, help keep local waterways clean, and avoid exposing our kids and ourselves to potentially harmful chemicals.

### Simple, positive steps

- **Build your soil** by adding compost and manure, applying mulch to keep weeds down, and planting cover crops, such as fava beans or field peas. Consider the wide variety of [organic fertilizers](#) than can help restore nutrients.
- **Test for acidity.** Western Oregon tends to have more acidic soils than vegetables prefer. You may want to add lime.
- **Let nature do the work** by enticing beneficial insects and pest-eaters to your garden with plants that flower and fruit. Install mason bee houses or nesting boxes for birds and bats. Some gardeners introduce ladybugs, but they can be expensive and may not stick around.
- **Rotate your crops** to prevent soil diseases.
- **Got pests?** Aphids and spider mites can be dislodged with water sprays, soapy water, or insecticidal soap. Hand pick larger pests like cabbage worms. Place barriers around young plants to protect from cutworms. Slugs can be caught with a [beer trap](#).
- **Read labels.** [Grow Smart Grow Safe](#) has a large database that ranks the safety of hundreds of products. If you do use a pesticide, use the smallest amount possible and follow instructions closely.
- **For more resources.**
  - [Natural Gardening Guide](#)
  - [Garden Insect Pests](#)

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at [jeanne@eco-schoolnetwork.org](mailto:jeanne@eco-schoolnetwork.org)