

20 Mule Team Borax

Warning

- When applied to garden soil in small doses, borax enriches soil and prevents pests. However, too much borax leads to toxicity in vegetables. Boron builds up in soils and remains up to 3 years. **Soil tests are recommended before adding borax.** Treat garden soil with borax only once every 3 years if there is a boron deficiency.

Ants

Ants can wreak havoc in a garden once they know free food is available. Make your own ant bait traps with borax, a little sugar and enough water to make a paste. The mixture can be spread on plastic lids and placed around the garden; scout ants will eat the mixture and take it back to the colony and the queen. As this mixture is slow acting, the scouts have time to poison the entire colony before succumbing to the borax poisoning. In addition, the mixture will entice the ants to leave the garden alone and work on the sweet paste instead of the vegetables.

Weeds

Unless used in small amounts -- such as 1/2 teaspoon in a gallon of water -- Borax is toxic to plants. Borax can be sprinkled directly onto weeds and even invasive ground ivy as a natural herbicide -- but be careful to avoid sprinkling it onto any vegetable plants; it is not discriminatory and kills any plant. It should be applied when rain is not in the forecast for several days for the best results. Or mix 1/2 cup of borax in a gallon of water and apply to the base of weeds to act as a liquid herbicide on the roots.

Fertilizer

While borax in large doses kills unwanted plants, in small doses it can be a soil booster -- especially in sandy soils that may be mineral deficient. A large vegetable garden of 1,000 square feet can safely benefit from 6 to 7 tablespoons of borax mixed in at tilling, either directly or diluted in water.

Soil tests are recommended before adding borax. Fruit trees -- such as apples -- benefit from the effects of borax, which not only fertilizes but can assist in fighting off rot and fruit-pitting.