

# HOW TO CONTROL APHIDS

## GET RID OF APHIDS BY HAND

### **Water:**

Spray aphids off of plants with a strong stream of water from a garden hose. This method is most effective early on in the season before an infestation has fully taken hold. It may not be a good choice for younger or more delicate plants, but it works well on plants where you can use higher water pressure.

### **Remove by hand:**

Put on some garden gloves and knock them off of stems, leaves, flower buds, or wherever you see them, and into a bucket of soapy water to kill them. You can also cut or prune off the affected areas and drop them into the bucket.

## CONTROL APHIDS WITH NATURAL AND ORGANIC SPRAYS

### **Soap and water:**

Make a homemade aphid spray by mixing a few tablespoons of a pure liquid soap (such as castile) in a small bucket of water. (Avoid using detergents or products with degreasers or moisturizers.) Apply with a spray bottle directly on aphids and the affected parts of the plant, making sure to soak the undersides of leaves where eggs and larvae like to hide. The soap dissolves the protective outer layer of aphids and other soft-bodied insects, eventually killing them. It doesn't harm birds or hard-bodied beneficial insects like lacewings, ladybugs or pollinating bees. You can also purchase ready-to-use insecticidal soaps online or at a local nursery.

### **Neem oil:**

The organic compounds in neem oil act as a repellent for aphids and other insects, including mealy bugs, cabbage worms, beetles, leafminers, ants and various types of caterpillars. However, it may repel beneficial insects, so use caution when and where they are present. Follow package instructions for diluting the oil in water or use a ready-to-use neem oil spray, and spray the affected areas. Neem oil is also good for controlling different types of fungus.

## Essential oils:

Create your own spray mixture with essential oils. Use 4 to 5 drops of each: peppermint, clove, rosemary and thyme, and mix with water in a small spray bottle. Spray on affected plants to target adult aphids, as well as aphid larvae and eggs.

## EMPLOY NATURAL PREDATORS



Pictured Left: Green lacewing larva. Photo by: Tomasz Klejdysz / Shutterstock.

Pictured Right: Lady beetle larva. Photo by: Geoffrey Budesza / Shutterstock.

## Lady beetles:

Adult lady beetles (ladybugs) don't eat nearly as many aphids as they do in their larval stage, which is why many people are disappointed with the lack of control they see after releasing purchased live ladybugs into their garden. There needs to be a large enough aphid population to keep the ladybugs fed long enough to mate and lay eggs — because it's the larvae that eat the most aphids. Ladybug larvae don't look at all like the adults we're so familiar with, so identification is important (see photo). Live ladybugs can be purchased online or at your local nursery.

Tips for better results:

- Lightly mist plants before releasing to encourage them to stop for a drink as they are probably dehydrated.
- Release them in cooler times of the day, early morning or evening.
- Repeat applications are needed, as most will fly away within a few days.

## Green lacewings:

As with ladybugs, green lacewing larvae do the work of controlling aphids. Green lacewing eggs can also be purchased online and sometimes at a local nursery.