

Green Home and Garden Tip #4

By Green Home and Garden Committee,
Texas Master Naturalist

Where have all the fireflies gone?? Does the spraying at night of mosquitoes have anything to do with it? Mother Nature had a pretty good system set up to control pests, then man thought he would improve on this and has really upset the applecart. After WWII, with no more enemy to create bombs for, the chemical industry decided to attack nature instead. There are natural predators and beneficial insects already in place to help control the true pests in a garden. Fireflies eat fleas; frogs, birds and dragonflies eat mosquitoes; spiders eat flies; snakes, owls and hawks help control rats; buy beneficial nematodes to attack fire ants, termites, grub worms and roaches. Don't forget about the other beneficial insects that can be attracted to your garden or purchased to fight against unsavory garden invaders. Ladybugs eat aphids, white flies and scale (scale on plants is an insect) Lacewing larvae kill aphids, mealy bugs and spider mites to name a few; and parasitoid wasps (very tiny and they don't sting) can control hornworms, earworms, cutworms and more. Not all insects are bad, but the broad-spectrum insecticides that can be so easily purchased and sprayed so liberally don't know the difference and can end up making the Monarch Butterfly and so many others extinct. (honeybees, where are you?) Children in normal suburban neighborhoods can no longer sit outside and catch a bunch of lightning bugs in a jar as could be done 40 years ago. What childhood memories will be extinct for their children? Will they have to tell the story of the beautiful orange and black butterfly and just show pictures because they are not around anymore?

The information below is from the website: Texans for Alternatives to Pesticides. <http://www.nopesticides.org/campaigns/imm.shtml>

Harris County Mosquito Control

Did you know that you do not have to have the mosquito trucks spray in front of your property? Call the Harris County Mosquito Control (713-440-4800) and ask them to provide you with a form to keep your property safe from dangerous pesticides. Headaches, dizziness, and skin irritations are indications of overexposure to the District's pesticides. Make sure the focus is on source reduction and larval control, for without them, situations may in fact be worsened. Children and pets will track the poisons into the house after spraying, which should only be done as a last resort and at night. Remember to drain all standing water from your property and use repellents

that are citrus or cedar based.

Pesticide products used by Harris County Mosquito Control are Malathion, Scourge and Dibron. For information and Fact Sheets for these and other pesticides used in mosquito control, go to [Beyond Pesticides](#).

The Texas Master Naturalists is a group of informed volunteers who are interested in learning about and educating others about the area of Texas where we live and with preserving our natural heritage. We are co-sponsored by the Texas Cooperative Extension Service and Texas Parks and Wildlife. For more information about our group, log on to gcmn.tamu.edu or www.coastalprairie.org.

The Green Home and Garden Workshop is an ongoing project co-sponsored by the Gulf Coast chapter and the Coastal Prairies chapter of Texas Master Naturalists. Our mission is to interest and inform people about safe and eco-friendly ways to garden and maintain their homes. We have a workshop event once a year. The next workshop will be held on February 16, 2008.