



Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

Frequently Asked Questions from the Help Desk: Mosquitoes

1. Do you have a list of the future programs on mosquito control in nearby areas?

You can go to www.mgnv.org and to <http://www.offices.ext.vt.edu/arlington/> to see calendars of upcoming programs on all of our subjects.

2. How often do I need to have the gutters cleaned this summer?

You need only clean out the gutters when you notice that they are not running freely or perhaps have them repaired/replaced if, because of damage or settling, they are holding water and not directing it towards the downspouts.

Simply make a point to observe the water flow from the downspouts occasionally. Normally cleanout is done after the leaves fall once a year before winter comes as water and debris freezing in the downspouts can cause water to backup into your soffits and roofing materials.

3. What fillings can I use for tree holes that will not create stress for older trees?

I would not advise using anything to fill up tree holes. If in fact they do hold water for more than a week at a time, consider treating it as you would any container and put a Dunk into it that is sized appropriately for the volume of water.

4. Can mosquito larvae grow in damp sand or damp soil (without a layer of water on top)?

Generally, the answer is no. There must be a pool of water for the larvae and pupae to develop. However, if such a pool were to be created on top of the sand/soil as like a puddle that would stay for a week or more, then the answer is yes.

5. Are there any mulches/plants, such as cedar, that repel mosquitoes?

Not to our current knowledge. However, the oils of certain plants have repellent properties (cedar, citronella, etc.), that if crushed or rubbed on the skin or other surfaces, will release their

oils. This should only be done on skin with great caution and after testing to ascertain that an allergic reaction does not develop.

6. Are there plants that can harbor the larvae? (My neighbor thought liriopie was one such plant).

Any dense foliage, particularly that close to the ground, will provide harborage to mosquitos. Top candidates include ground covers, such as English ivy, which provides moist shade that is pretty impervious to predators. Shrubs that are pruned incorrectly are also preferred, as they have a shell of green on the outside (think hedges) with no access to the interior of the plant for light, air, and predators.

7. What products are best for those of us who cannot tolerate DEET?

Products with the active ingredients picaridin, oil of eucalyptus and IR 3535 (less effective), would be your best bet. Always read the label and consult with your doctor if you have a history of sensitivity to pesticides.

8. How can I find out if there are nooks around my house/property that may be holding small amounts of stagnant water, that I may not be able to see or reach?

There is no one answer to this complex concern. Other than trying to find out all of these spots on your own, you can hire someone with a ladder to check around your roofing and gutters for any spots that are capable of holding excess water. You may also want to check with your arborist if you are concerned that your trees are holding spots for water, as they may suggest some methods to cover these holes without causing damage to the tree. However, we recommend that you only pursue these extensive options if you believe that there is significant potential for mosquito breeding.

9. Can I tell by looking if my pond or rain barrel has mosquito larvae in it?

Yes. Mosquito larvae go through 4 'instars' before they change into a pupae. The Mosquito larvae are about 1/4 inch long and rest with their heads at the water surface and their bodies hanging down. The non-feeding, comma-shaped pupae also breathes through tubes at the water surface. They can move too if they are disturbed but will return to the top. Go here to see a video of their metamorphosis: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2NRoxyf3aY>