You can be a Lazy Gardener too!
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Protecting Kids & Pets in the Home and Garden

The Best Ways to Control Ants

Everyday Actions Affect Creeks, Wetlands & the Bay

The Bee-All and End-All about Bees

Community Grants Available
Ask the Gardening Queen

Dear G.Q.,
People (including one of my family members who shall remain nameless) seem to flip out when they see ants. Do ants really deserve such a strong reaction?

Unruffled in Union City

Dear Unruffled,
What a diplomat you are! To answer your question: No, ants don’t warrant the kind of panic they often trigger. The most common ant invading our homes is the Argentine ant. It is small, dark brown, 1/8” long with queens that are slightly larger. When some people see them, their first reaction is to spray, but that will only take care of about 10% of the population. If you follow these simple steps instead, you’ll have more success preventing and managing a future infestation. Here they are:

1. Find out why the ants are coming in. If the reason is food, remove it and store it in an airtight container.
2. Seal the ants out with caulking.
3. Keep your home clean and dry. Ants need food and water.
4. Put pet food dishes in a moat of soapy water.
5. Use bait stations so the ants take the bait back to the nest and stop the source. (Note: It’s important to use bait stations rather than loose bait, which can attract non-target animals and is more difficult to dispose of properly.)
6. Don’t spray around bait stations as this repels ants and prevents them from taking the bait.
7. Argentine ants change their food preferences frequently, so keep several different baits on hand and alternate as needed.

Sincerely,
The Gardening Queen

Spraying ants is actually not the best way to control them, and it’s not the healthiest way either.

For more information, go to www.ourwaterourworld.org/FactSheets and click on Ants.

Gardening Queen Annie Joseph has been a California Certified Nursery Professional for over 30 years. For over a decade she has consulted to the Our Water Our World Program, working collaboratively with water pollution prevention agencies and industry professionals to reduce pesticide and nutrient runoff into our waterways.

How to Find a Green Pest Management Operator

Are you looking to hire a professional pest control service? Choosing an Integrated Pest Management (IPM)-certified provider ensures that the contractor emphasizes pest prevention and uses the least toxic methods available. To find an IPM operator near you, search the following web listings:

www.ecowisecertified.org
www.certifiedgreenpro.org

BEE-LIEVE IT OR NOT?

Almost a third of our daily diet comes from crops pollinated by bees.

Without bees there would be very few fruits, vegetables or seeds. An estimated 70 to 80% of all flowering plants depend on insects to pollinate them. For more information, visit www.ourwaterourworld.org and click on “Pest Control Operators and Landscapers.” Here you can also download a fact sheet with questions to ask pest management services before you choose one.
Protecting the Ones You Love

Are you doing everything you can?

by Sharon Gosselin

If you’re a parent or a pet owner—or both—you already go to great lengths to keep your kids and pets safe. Your dog wears a reflective collar, and your daughter doesn’t get on her bike without her helmet. So why not take the next step?

More and more parents and pet owners realize that keeping their loved ones safe means protecting them from harmful chemicals as well as more obvious hazards. Of course, first and foremost you need to prevent access to harmful products, like bug sprays, radiator coolant and so on. But you can avoid many common hazards by using safer alternatives to some of these products.

You can find non-toxic "recipes" for many common household chores and gardening needs at www.cleanwaterprogram.org. You can also find information on non-chemical solutions such as traps, weed fabric and tree wraps at www.ourwaterourworld.org.

Sharon Gosselin is a Stormwater Program Manager for the County of Alameda and the Alameda County Flood Control and Water Conservation District.

Children and pets are safer when household and garden chemicals are kept to a minimum.

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Top 5 Low-Toxic Gardening Tips

1. Healthy plants are less susceptible to pests. Work nutrient-rich compost into your soil—ideally from your own compost bin!

2. Hummingbirds and beneficial insects such as ladybugs and lacewings feast on pests. Attract this natural pest patrol with plants whose nectar and pollen provide food. (To learn more, visit www.ourwaterourworld.org/QuickLinks/BeneficialInsects.aspx)

3. Choose native plants. They need less maintenance and are better adapted to resist pests. (To learn more, visit www.cnps.org)

4. Fight ants by spraying them with a mixture of water and liquid soap. Find non-toxic recipes to control other pests at www.cleanwaterprogram.com.

5. Avoid overhead sprinkling, especially with roses. Wet foliage is more susceptible to diseases.

BEE-LIEVE IT OR NOT?

ALL BEES LIVE IN LARGE COLONIES IN HIVES.

Only the social honeybee builds and lives in hives, alone. The rest of the colony, along with the other bee species, are solitary and burrow in soil to build their nests.
The Clean Water Program:  
Teaming up to protect local creeks and the Bay 

by Stefanie Pruegel

Living in an urban environment, it’s easy to forget how closely connected we are to our local creeks, lakes and the Bay. That is, until large amounts of litter end up on our shorelines after a storm. Surprisingly, most of this debris originates inland.

“The rain water washes plastic bags and cups, cigarette butts and other trash off the streets and into storm drains. From there the litter is carried directly into our creeks and the Bay, without any treatment,” explains Jim Scanlin, Manager of the Clean Water Program.

Comprised of local government agencies, the Clean Water Program works to prevent pollution to waterways throughout Alameda County. “Our member agencies all deal with very similar issues, so pooling our resources to take action on a countywide level makes a lot of sense,” reasons Scanlin. Since its inception in 1991, the Clean Water Program has been monitoring the health and water quality of the county’s creeks, and has worked with the community to keep the water entering the storm drains as clean as possible.

Patrizia Guccione, a Clean Water Program Specialist for the City of Alameda, runs through some of the Program’s many outreach activities: “We sponsor environmental education programs for schools, talk to residents at public events and help businesses prevent harmful discharges to the storm drain system.” During her routine visits to Alameda businesses, Guccione takes time to explain the impact even one spill can have on local waterways. “I am known as the storm drain lady,” she laughs.

Invisible Pollution

While the Clean Water Program is working hard to keep trash out of the county’s waterways, less visible pollutants present an even bigger threat to our creeks’ health. “Cars leaking fluids on the road, soapy water dumped into the gutter, rain washing garden chemicals off the lawn and into storm drains … all these incidents add up to a significant toxic injection into our local creeks,” illustrates Scanlin. Pesticides used by home gardeners are of particular concern because they can harm fish and other sensitive aquatic organisms. On land, pesticides have unwelcome side effects, too, posing a risk to kids and pets, and killing beneficial insects like bees and ladybugs, along with the pests.

To bring awareness to this issue, and to help home gardeners find alternative pest control methods, the Clean Water Program has launched a countywide outreach campaign highlighting the vulnerability of bees and other beneficial insects in order to raise awareness about the many harmful effects of water pollution. Barb Kusha, who represents the Zone 7 Water Agency at the Clean Water Program, helped develop the materials, which included a spray bottle label with non-toxic pesticide recipes. “These formulas use ingredients you can find in most kitchens—like cooking oil and dish soap,” she explains.

“They’re not only safer for people and the environment, but also cheaper than commercial pesticides.”

Continued on page 5
Partnering with Retailers

Beyond this summer’s “bee campaign,” the Clean Water Program is working year-round with local nurseries and hardware stores to help them assist customers in choosing safe and least toxic gardening products. The efforts are coordinated through a regional partnership called Our Water Our World, at no cost to the stores. Since 1997, the program has trained hundreds of employees at participating stores in pest control methods that protect people, pets and the environment. Partner stores also receive over 20 fact sheets on different pests and plant diseases to hand out to customers, as well as colorful shelf tags that help identify low-risk products.

“To date we have over 200 partner stores—31 of them in Alameda County,” marvels Annie Joseph, a less-toxic pest management expert who conducts the staff trainings and keeps partner stores abreast of the latest developments in least toxic pest control. “Plant diseases and pests—as well as products and methods to keep them in check—change constantly,” Joseph explains. “We make sure that our partner stores are in the know, so they can pass this information on to their customers,” she adds.

With an increasing number of home gardeners looking for green products, partner stores appreciate the guidance Our Water Our World provides. “Most people want to do the right thing and protect their local environment,” asserts Scanlin. “The Clean Water Program is here to offer support wherever we can.”

Stefanie Pruegel has written articles on environmental topics for over 15 years. She currently works at Gigantic Idea Studio in Oakland.

Visit the Clean Water Program at the Alameda County Fair!

June 22–July 10
Look for their distinctive booth in the Ag Building.

List of Our Water Our World Partner Stores

Alameda
Encinal Nursery
2057 Encinal Ave.
Encinal Hardware
2801 Encinal Ave.
Thomsen’s Garden Center
1113 Lincoln Ave.

Berkeley
Berkeley Ace Hardware
2145 University Ave.
Berkeley Horticultural
1310 McGee Ave.
Dwight Way Nursery
1001 Dwight Way
Orchard Supply Hardware
1025 Ashby Ave.
East Bay Nursery
2332 San Pablo Ave.
Westbrae Nursery
Garden Supply
1272 Gilman Ave.

Castro Valley
Pete’s Ace Hardware
2569 Castro Valley Blvd.

Dublin
Armstrong Garden Center
7360 San Ramon Rd.
Orchard Supply Hardware
7884 Dublin Blvd.

Emeryville
Home Depot
Emeryville
3838 Hollis St.

Fremont
Orchard Supply Hardware
5130 Mowry Ave.
Regan’s Nursery
4268 Decoto Rd.

Hayward
A& Foothill Hardware
22500 Foothill Blvd.

Livermore
Orchard Supply Hardware
1450 First St.
Alden Lane Nursery
981 Alden Ln.

Oakland
Grand Lake Ace Garden Center
4001 Grand Ave.
Dale Hardware
37100 Post

Broadway Terrace Nursery
4340 Clarewood Dr.
CVS (Old Long’s)
5100 Broadway
Thornhill Nursery
6250 Thornhill Dr.
Montclair Village Hardware
5048 Woodminster Ln.

Pleasanton
Western Garden Nursery
2756 Vineyard Ave.

San Leandro
Evergreen Nursery and Garden Supply
350 San Leandro Blvd.
Tom’s Ace Hardware
14315 East 14th St.

Orchard Supply Hardware
300 Floresta Blvd.
San Lorenzo
Orchard Supply Hardware
1777 Lewelling Blvd.
Local Expert Dispels Myths
Dr. Frankie and colleagues prove they’re the bee-all and end-all in insect advice

Gardening expert Annie Joseph’s mind was buzzing with questions about bees. Her hankering for the truth got the better of her recently, and she just couldn’t mind her own beeswax any longer. Joseph decided to interview local expert Dr. Gordon Frankie, who helped clear up a lot of issues that were bugging her bee-fore.

AJ: How important are native bees to our gardens?

GF: Native bees are a part of the natural heritage of California. They pollinate fruit trees and flowers and are an important educational tool.

AJ: I understand you’re writing a book about native bees.

GF: Yes, we have nearly completed a book that has been twelve years in the making called *Bees of North America: Bees and their Flowers in Urban California Gardens*. The 300-page book is the first of its kind in the world. It lists all of the main plants that bees like.

AJ: What kinds of things can we do to encourage native bees in our gardens?

GF: Plant a diverse garden, including plants that bloom throughout the season. Use organic products as much as possible. If you want to encourage bees, don’t use pesticides. Since 70% of native bees are ground nesters, leave 50% of the area around your plants bare soil. Females dig their nests or may use existing holes from last year. Bumble bees use cavities of old rodent burrows and even use old bird houses.

AJ: Some people are concerned about being stung by bees. Is this a legitimate worry?

GF: Bees are vegetarian. They’re more interested in pollen, nectar, and sex so there’s no reason for them to bother you.

For more information go to [http://nature.berkeley.edu/urbanbeegardens/](http://nature.berkeley.edu/urbanbeegardens/).

Gordon Frankie is a professor and research entomologist in the Division of Insect Biology, College of Natural Resources, University of California, Berkeley.

Annie Joseph has been a California Certified Nursery Professional for over 30 years. For over a decade she has consulted to the Our Water Our World Program.

Less Work, More Fun: Tips from a Lazy Gardener

Tired of endless weeding, feeding, watering and mowing? Try some lazy gardening techniques such as replacing your lawn with native and other drought-resistant plants. Albany resident Leslie Zander did just that and hasn’t looked back since. “I used to spend all weekend mowing and edging the lawn, and many summer evenings watering it by hand,” she recalls with a sigh. “Then the pests! I was always combating rust and other diseases, and spending a lot of time and money on that.” Today a wide array of California native plants flourish where the lawn once was, providing greenery and color throughout the year. “My garden has become a lot more interesting,” notes Leslie. “And now that there’s less maintenance work, I actually have time to enjoy it!”

Leslie’s garden was featured on this year’s Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour. For pictures and more information on gardening with native plants, visit [www.bringingbackthenatives.net](http://www.bringingbackthenatives.net), or the Bay Friendly Gardening section on [www.StopWaste.Org](http://www.StopWaste.Org).
Grant Program Makes Great Things Possible

What do you want to do in your community?

by Kristin Hathaway

Have a project you’ve been burning to do? Want to make a difference in your community but don’t have the funds? The Clean Water Program’s Community Stewardship Grant Program may be just the ticket!

Grants of up to $5,000 (and no less than $1,000) are available to schools, non-profit groups, and community organizations. The types of projects that are eligible range from creek clean-ups to art projects—as long as they take place in Alameda County and help promote protection of our creeks or the Bay. Imagination, innovation and collaboration between groups are all strongly encouraged!

EarthTeam of Berkeley applied for a Community Stewardship Grant in 2009. The funding helped to support their partnership with the Friends of Sausal Creek (FOSC), allowing Dr. Katie Noonan’s Oakland High School students to help with restoration work at FOSC’s Monterey Blvd. redwood restoration site. Noonan is co-founder of Oakland High School’s Environmental Science Academy. Their field trips allowed her sophomore biology students to learn lots of great science while having a positive impact on their community.

“I’m so proud of what we’ve accomplished at Sausal Creek,” Noonan declares. “By removing invasive species and planting natives, the students have had a real impact on the local ecology, and ultimately, on the Bay. They learned so much and they developed a connection to a natural place that they wouldn’t have otherwise.”

The next grant cycle closes on July 15. Grant manager Betsy Diaz encourages anyone with an idea for protecting Alameda County’s waterways to apply. “We’ve received applications for so many fantastic projects in the past. It’s really exciting to see the passion and creativity people have!”

For more detailed information and to download an application, go to www.cleanwaterprogram.org. For other questions, please contact Betsy Diaz at betsydiaz@earthlink.net.

Kristin Hathaway, CSM, is a Watershed Program Specialist with the City of Oakland Public Works Agency’s Watershed and Stormwater Management Program, and Chair of the Clean Water Program’s Public Information and Participation Subcommittee.

“...nonselective chemicals...have the power to kill every insect, the ‘good’ and the ‘bad,’ to still the song of birds and the leaping of fish in the streams, to coat the leaves with a deadly film, and to linger on in soil—all this though the intended target may be only a few weeds or insects.”

— Rachel Carson, author of Silent Spring, 1962

COMMUNITY GRANTS
Now accepting applications for projects protecting creeks, wetlands or the Bay.
DEADLINE: JULY 15, 2011
Download an application at www.cleanwaterprogram.org

BEE-LIEVE IT OR NOT?

TO PRODUCE ONE TEASPOON OF HONEY, 12 WORKER BEES HAVE TO WORK ALL THEIR LIVES.

The average worker bee produces only about 1/12th teaspoon of honey in her lifetime (about 6 weeks).

ANSWER: BEE-LIEVE IT!
“Ask Our Expert” Answers Your Questions
From Ants to Yellowjackets

by Annie Joseph

Is a pest question bugging you? Not to worry. Try the “Ask Our Expert” function on the Our Water Our World website. Your answer will be just an email away, courtesy of the Bio-Integral Resource Center in Berkeley or BIRC.

Since 1979 BIRC has worked with experts in the field and researchers at universities throughout the U.S. to study pests and ways to keep them in check without resorting to toxic pesticides. “We have gathered a wealth of knowledge on safe, prevention-based pest control,” explains BIRC’s director Bill Quarles. “It is our mission to make those resources available to anybody dealing with urban or agricultural pest problems, and answering questions is one way.”

Most “Ask Our Expert” inquiries come from Bay Area residents. The calls peak during the summer months when pests are on the rise. “Many people ask us about ants and termites, and how to get rid of them using the least toxic methods,” observes Quarles, who responds to most of the questions himself. Another popular topic: mystery insect bites that appear overnight with no apparent cause. “Sometimes these are rat mites, sometimes bed bugs, and sometimes it takes a lot of detective work to figure it out,” Quarles confesses.

Besides giving hands-on tips to regular folks, BIRC trains pest management professionals in practices that emphasize prevention and non-chemical treatment methods. Qualifying firms can obtain EcoWise certification, which BIRC helped develop. “Many people would like to hire professionals who minimize or eliminate the use of pesticides. The EcoWise Certified Program is designed to help locate those contractors,” explains Quarles.

To submit your pest question to BIRC, visit www.ourwaterourworld.org and click on the Ask Our Expert tab.

Pesticides used at home end up in our water.

The Clean Water Program empowers local residents to protect water. Using less-toxic alternatives for pest control, cleaning and gardening, and washing your car properly are all things you can do to prevent pollution. We can show you how.

To learn more, visit www.cleanwaterprogram.org.

Protecting Alameda County Creeks, Wetlands & the Bay

www.ourwaterourworld.org

- Fact sheets on managing specific pests without using hazardous materials
- Pocket guide to managing 10 common pests
- Where to buy safer alternatives to pesticides
- List of products considered safer than conventional pesticides
- List of products sorted by the pest they target
- Ask Our Expert feature: submit a specific question and receive a personal reply