

# #bepesticidefree problem pests: **Ants**

## Preventative Controls

- Keep aphids populations low in your garden - Ants love to farm their honeydew excretions.
- Presence of ant hills means dry, sandy soil. Keep your soil healthy, moist and rich!

## Cultural Controls:

(altering the layout of your garden to detract and repel pests):



### Repellent plants (plant near your prize plants to keep aphids at bay):

Pennyroyal (a creeping mint – so be careful to keep it contained), spearmint, tansy, southernwood, sage, lavender (at left) and hyssop.

Plant spearmint and tansy near kitchen to keep ants out.

## Organic Controls:

- Keep the area moist and *well watered* to send the ants away. They like dry conditions.
- To keep them out of tree canopies, apply *tanglefoot* (a balsam resin) to tree trunk bases. If you do not want to paint directly on the tree, wrap a fiberglass/plastic covering around the bottom and paint this. This will also help curb cankerworm infestations
- Make a *tea of ferns* and pour around affected plants.
- *Diatomaceous earth* sprinkled around the hill or along their feeding path will dry ants out.
- As a last resort, make a *borax solution* to pour into ant hills:  
For each cup of boiling water add 1/2c of sugar, let cool and add 1 tbsp of borax. Pour onto ant colony. If it's applied repeatedly or too strong of a concentration, you will end up with an area where you can't grow anything until the borax leaches out of the soil. This may take years so **USE SPARINGLY**.
- Alternatively, mix 2 tsp borax in a 1/2L of apple jelly and drop the mixture around the mound. The ants will carry it back to the queen to kill her.
- Apply *corn meal* – the ants cannot digest it and they die.

**Be sure to keep children and pets away from the sweet borax solution to prevent accidental ingestion!**

### To learn more about the information in this factsheet:

Books: Ecological Gardening: Your path to a Healthy Garden by Marjorie Harris,  
The Prairie Gardener's Book of Bugs by Nora Bryan and Grace Buzik,  
Successful Organic Gardening by David R. Murray,  
Pests of the West: Prevention and Control for Today's Garden and Small Farm by Whitney Cranshaw, and  
The Organic Gardener's Handbook of Natural Insect and Disease Control by Barbara W. Ellis and Fern Marshal Bradley.



## Why worry about Ants?

**Ants** 'farm' and feed off of aphids, so if you see ants crawling up and down your plant stems, chances are you probably have aphid problems.

You should deal with ants at the same time as aphids.

On their own, ant hills can do damage to root systems and lawn turf. However you should only treat ants **IF** there is a problem infestation. Ants are beneficial in the garden as soil-tillers and soil-aerators.

Ants also "clean up" the soil and can also be found destroying the larvae of house & fruit flies!

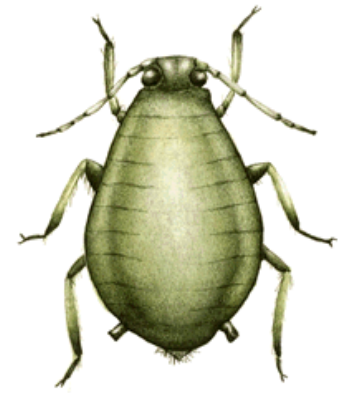


Working for a  
Sustainable Future

www.environmentalsociety.ca  
info@environmentalsociety.ca  
ph 306.665.1915  
May 2011

# #bepesticidefree

## problem pests: Aphids



### Preventative Controls:

- Clean up your garden and don't leave discarded plants around.
- Thoroughly cultivate areas where you've had to remove plants.
- Presence of aphids may indicate *low nitrogen* in your soil. Feed Your Soil!!
- To discourage winged aphids, put sheets of aluminium foil around the base of your plants. They get confused by the reflection of the sky.

### Cultural Controls:

(altering the layout of your garden to detract and repel pests):



#### Trap plants (these attract insects away from prize plants):

*Nasturtiums, plantain, lamb's quarters*

#### Repellent plants (plant with prize plants to keep aphids at bay):

*Chives (seen at left), onion, garlic, pennyroyal (a creeping mint- so keep this contained!), tansy, and anise.*

### What exactly is an Aphid?

**Aphids** are small, soft-bodied insects that suck plant juices out of plants, trees and leaves.

If you see ants climbing up and down plant stems, you could have aphids (as ants like to "farm" aphids for their honeydew).

### Biological Controls and Beneficial Insects:

**Ladybugs** (ladybirds) LOVE to eat aphids. Attract ladybugs to your garden for a feast by placing plants with umbrella shaped flowers such as fennel, dill, cilantro, caraway, angelica, tansy, wild carrot & yarrow in your garden. Other plants that attract ladybugs include cosmos (especially the white ones), *Coreopsis*, scented geraniums and dandelions. The ladybugs will come for the meal, but will stay for the pollen.

\*If you can't wait for ladybugs to come to you, you can purchase a 'jar' of ladybugs from gardening centres, such as Dutch Growers in Saskatoon, SK.



### Organic controls:

- Try washing them off with a *strong stream of water* from a hose or pressure washer. Doing this once or twice a week should do the trick.
- Use a paint brush to paint the undersides of your plant leaves with *baking soda*
- After cleaning leaves with an *insecticidal soap*, brush *diatomaceous earth* on leaves
- Paint *tanglefoot* on yellow cardboard and hang it near the plant to trap aphids
- Use a yellow dish at the base of the plant and fill it with *soapy water*
- Mince *shallots* in food processor **OR** boil *rhubarb leaves* for ½ hour with 3L of water – add 1L of water when cool – dissolve 2.5ml (1oz) of soap flakes in the mix – strain and use as a spray.
- Chop *tomato leaves* and add 1L of boiling water – steep – strain – dilute with water in a 4:1 ratio – spray away!



Working for a Sustainable Future

www.environmentalsociety.ca  
info@environmentalsociety.ca  
ph 306.665.1915  
May 2011