



## MOSQUITO CONTROL - IT'S UP TO ALL OF US

Summer mosquitoes aren't just a backyard annoyance anymore. Each year government agencies find mosquitoes carrying West Nile virus and other diseases in our area. As a homeowner, you probably wonder what you can do to minimize mosquitoes on your own property. But before you consider hiring a private company to spray your yard for adult insects, follow the steps below. They are modeled on an approach called Integrated Pest Management and are both "greener" and more effective than spraying.

### GET RID OF STANDING WATER

The most effective way to control mosquitoes is to eliminate them while they are still larvae, *before* they become able to fly and bite. Mosquitoes lay their eggs in still water, so get rid of any standing water on your property. Even the small amount that collects in the bottoms of your flower pots can contain mosquito larvae. Check your gutters as well as any containers that can hold water. Rain barrels or cisterns should have a fine mesh screen over their openings to prevent mosquitoes from laying eggs there. Change the water in wading pools or bird baths at least once a week. Fill or drain low spots in your yard. Check grill covers and play equipment. If it can hold a tablespoon of water, it can be a breeding place for mosquitoes.

In Wilmette and our neighboring communities, the North Shore Mosquito Abatement District (NSMAD) works all season to control mosquito populations, preferably by treating standing water. The products they use to kill larvae are much more specific to mosquitoes and less harmful to other wildlife when used correctly than sprays are.

The agency keeps a map of all locations it has treated in the past and asks that the public inform it of new areas of standing water. You can report standing water on your property or any other location on the NSMAD website at <https://www.nsmad.com/fight-the-bite/>. The agency will come out for free to inspect and treat the water for mosquito larvae. It will also put the location on its map, and return to check and treat the area going forward.

### ASSESS WHETHER YOU ACTUALLY HAVE A MOSQUITO PROBLEM

Part of an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach is figuring out whether a pest is present before treating. Chemicals are powerful and usually produce other consequences in the environment besides their intended one. If you don't have mosquitoes, don't treat for them. Consider that private spray companies are "paid to spray" and are unlikely to recommend that you skip treatments.

If you do find biting mosquitoes, you can report them to the NSMAD (use the link above). The agency can do what a hired company cannot. They can inspect neighbors' properties as well as yours, looking for the source of the mosquitoes--likely standing water--and treating it. Contact NSMAD for advice before you spray at 847-446-9434. Sign up for updates at <https://www.nsmad.com/>



## **ATTRACT NATURAL PREDATORS**

All kinds of wildlife, from birds to bats to dragonflies, eat mosquitoes. Planting plants native to this region in your yard will attract these predators, helping to control the presence of adult mosquitoes.

## **MINIMIZE YOUR USE OF CHEMICAL SPRAYS**

The NSMAD uses truck-based ultra low volume spraying as a last resort to control adult mosquitoes. In 2019, the agency did not have to use sprays at all. Spraying is less effective than treating larvae because it either relies on a finely misted chemical coming in contact with a flying insect or a less fine chemical fog landing on plants and other surfaces, where the insect may or may not contact it. The most commonly used chemicals in sprays, pyrethrins, are toxic to insects. This means they can harm bees and other pollinators that come in contact with them.

Minimizing your personal use of pyrethrins is also a public health issue. The NSMAD tests mosquitoes and larvae it collects for resistance to pesticides, and many insects on the North Shore show some resistance to these chemicals. That means that one of the agency's tools for controlling a mosquito-borne disease outbreak is already less effective. Keeping pyrethrins out of the environment as much as possible saves them for when they are really needed.

## **PROTECT YOURSELF FROM NEIGHBORING CHEMICAL SPRAYS**

If your neighbors use a private spray service, ask them to inform you and other neighbors before each treatment. Be aware that applicators of spray pesticides must avoid spraying when bystanders are present, so they should stop the application if they see a neighbor in an adjacent yard. Click here for a list of ways you can protect your family, yard, pets and vegetables from spray drift. [https://epi.dph.ncdhhs.gov/cd/diseases/mosquito\\_spray.html](https://epi.dph.ncdhhs.gov/cd/diseases/mosquito_spray.html)

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