

Neem seed oil as a natural alternative to commercial insect repellents.



Neem seed oil has been gaining popularity as a natural insect repellent for use on the body and in the garden.

The oil is pressed from the fruits and seeds of *Azadirachta indica*, an evergreen tree native to India, where it has been traditionally used in remedies for a wide variety of skin problems. Neem at just one or two percent of the total product is also an effective insect repellent. Although neem has a strong scent that some people find disagreeable, it masks the scent of the wearer and can prevent insects from landing.

Unlike commercial insecticides that indiscriminately kill insects, neem oil only affects insects that chew or suck. When neem is ingested, it disrupts the insect's normal functions. Some forget to eat, fly or lay eggs, or they may lay eggs that are sterile. Without food or larvae, the insects will die, leaving insect populations diminished.

Outdoor pests can cause a variety of dangerous illnesses and problems, making protection a vital part of your family's care. Insect repellents work by masking the human scent or mimicking a scent that insects typically avoid, and are helpful in preventing and controlling insect-borne diseases, such as malaria, West Nile virus and Lyme disease.

Because insect repellents are applied directly to clothing, skin or fur, controversy over the safety of commercial insecticides, particularly those containing DEET, has led to increasing development of natural insect repellents.

Claims abound that natural insect repellents don't work, but according to reports issued by the Center for Disease Control, certain natural substances, such as essential oil of lemon eucalyptus, have been shown to be as effective as DEET in repelling mosquitoes.

Natural insect repellents such as neem can be a safe and effective alternative to commercial pesticides. The reality is that insect-borne diseases can be a serious health risk to people, animals and plants. Families may need to stock a variety of products, including chemical spot on treatments that fit different situations and personal comfort zones – or stay indoors for a few days until the swarms have passed.