

**Your Watershed:  
Integrated Pest Management**  
by the Russian River Watershed Association

When ants, aphids, or other pests invade your yard, it is tempting to reach for the strongest pesticide spray you have. Though chemical pesticides can be very effective against pests, they can also be harmful to wildlife, including wildlife living in our creeks and other waterways. You don't have to spray pesticides alongside a creek for the pesticides you use to reach it. When you water your yard or when it rains, pesticide residues are picked up from pavement and other hard surfaces and carried from your yard into storm drains and straight into our creeks and rivers **without treatment.**

The Russian River Watershed Association would like to remind you that there are many ways to manage pest invasions using less toxic methods. As with any problem, prevention is the best cure. For example, to prevent mosquito problems, eliminate standing water in buckets, barrels and other containers and change bird bath water frequently. Use barriers to keep snails away from planters, and sticky barriers to keep ants off trees or shrubs, instead of sprays.

Where prevention and barriers are not effective, less toxic options to chemical pesticides can be used. Not all insects are pests in the garden. Beneficial insects will eat or otherwise deter garden pests. As an example, lady bugs make their meals out of aphids and can be purchased for release in your garden to attack your aphid infestation. Insecticidal soaps, oils, and bait traps are less harmful to our waterways and wildlife than harsher chemical sprays. Ask at your local nursery for help finding these less toxic products.

For controlling weeds without using pesticides, use mulch as a ground cover beneath and surrounding plants and shrubs. The mulch will prevent sunlight from reaching the seeds of unwanted plants. An added benefit of using mulch is water conservation. Mulch helps to keep moisture in the soil, meaning you need to water less. Organic mulches include bark, wood chips, compost, nut hulls and stones.

If, as a last resort, you do need to use pesticides, use only as much as necessary. Read the instructions to be sure to use the most safe and effective method of application. Never use pesticides that have been banned for legal use, such as DDT or chlordane. If you have banned pesticides stored in your home, dispose of them at your local Household Hazardous Waste drop-off site. Don't pour them down the drain; our wastewater treatments plants are not designed to remove most pesticides from wastewater.

In Sonoma County take unwanted pesticides and other household toxic wastes to the landfill at 500 Mecham Rd., Petaluma. Call the EcoDesk at (707) 565-3375 for more information.

In Mendocino County call the Recycling Hotline at (707) 468-9704 for information regarding household hazardous waste collection sites or visit their website at [www.mendorecycle.org/haz.html](http://www.mendorecycle.org/haz.html).

For online fact sheets about less toxic pest management, go to the UC Davis Integrated Pest Management website at: [www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/index.html](http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/index.html)  
Or visit: [www.ourwaterourworld.org](http://www.ourwaterourworld.org) for fact sheets, locations to buy less toxic products, and other resources.

For help dealing with your specific pest problem, call the Sonoma County master gardener program at (707) 565-2608 Monday-Friday. In Mendocino County, call the University of California Cooperative Extension office in Ukiah at (707) 463-4495.

The Russian River Watershed Association ([www.rrwatershed.org](http://www.rrwatershed.org)) is an association of eleven cities, counties and special districts in the watershed that are working together on programs for clean water, fisheries restoration and watershed enhancement.