

Nine mosquito myths debunked

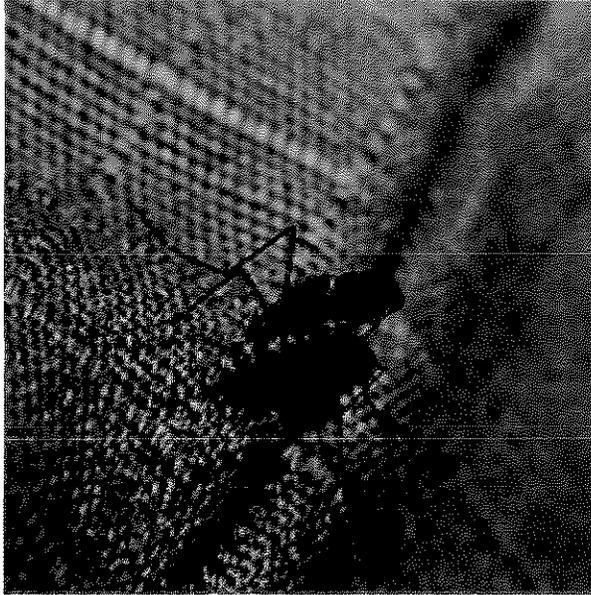
By Sarah B. Weir

Posted Mon Jul 18, 2011 2:57pm PDT

Related topics: **Health, Safety, Science, Gardening, Tips**

More from Green Picks blog

Buzz up!



(Photo: Getty Images)

The first buzz of a mosquito is an unpleasant reminder that summer fun comes with a pesky price. We examined the science behind common mosquito myths and found that while some have a basis in reality, many are plain bunk. Mosquitoes are more than a nuisance -- they carry harmful diseases such as encephalitis and malaria.

Here's what you need to know about the season's most unwanted guest:

1. Lemon dish soap and Listerine repel mosquitoes

Fiction: This myth has been widely circulated around the Internet. According to the Florida Medical Entomology Lab at the University of Florida, these household products do not work to thwart mosquitoes. One of the most effective repellents is DEET. The Centers for Disease Control also recommends repellents with Picaridin and oil of lemon eucalyptus.

If you use a product containing DEET, read the label and do not over-apply. DEET is a powerful chemical that can be harmful if used incorrectly. Make sure the repellent has an EPA-approved label and registration number. Use caution with small children and stick with a formulation that is made for kids.

2. Ultrasonic devices repel mosquitoes

Fiction: Save your money. According to the Department of Entomology at Purdue, these gadgets don't work. Bug zappers do kill mosquitoes, but they also electrocute many beneficial insects including those that eat mosquitoes, so the scientists at Purdue recommend against using them.

3. Taking B vitamins repels mosquitoes

Maybe: According to the Mayo Clinic, B vitamins change a person's odor, which may indeed make them less attractive to mosquitoes.

4. Eating garlic repels mosquitoes

Fiction: According to current research, consuming large amounts of garlic only works against vampires and bad dates.

5. Skin-So-Soft products repel mosquitoes

Fact: BUT, buyer beware: According to a study by the University of Florida, Skin-So-Soft and other products containing Citronella oil are only effective for between 3 and 10 *minutes* after application.

6. Creating a bat or Purple Martin habitat will rid your yard of mosquitoes

Fiction: While both species are insectivores, they probably won't eat enough mosquitoes to make a noticeable difference at your next garden party.

7. Meat tenderizer calms an itchy bite

Fact: The Mayo Clinic recommends mixing a tablespoon of water with a tablespoon of meat tenderizer and forming a paste to apply to a bite. Using an ice pack can ease discomfort as well. OTC remedies to try: hydrocortisone cream and calamine lotion.

8. Mosquitoes die after feeding

Fiction: Unfortunately, the female mosquito (males don't eat blood, they feed on nectar) can live to bite again. Females will die if they don't get their first blood meal, which they require in order to lay eggs.

9. Mosquitoes transmit the HIV virus

Fiction: According to scientists at the Centers for Disease Control, Rutgers University, and others, mosquitoes cannot transmit the HIV virus from human to human. They do carry the West Nile virus and other serious diseases.