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Growing a healthy and pest free garden

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Humans have been bothered by bugs since the beginning of time and have been applying pesticides to purge these pesky problems for thousands of years. Going back to 2500 BC, we find the Sumerians using sulphur to control mites. Fast forward to 1000 BC and we read Homer?s writings about the use of sulfur to fumigate homes. And, speeding to 900 AD, we watch as the Chinese use arsenic to control garden pests.

This use of inorganic and biological substances continues as a way to control pests and diseases in gardens and homes. Over the millennium, humans have learned how to use Paris green, lead arsenate, calcium arsenate, selenium compounds, lime sulfur, pyrethrum, thiram, mercury, copper sulfate, derris, and nicotine to control harmful insects and plant diseases. But, one thing can be said, humanity had the foresight to use these compounds in limited quantities. Handed down from generation to generation was the belief that cultural methods such as crop rotation, soil tilling, and planting crops around a pest?s life cycle to avoid devastation were saner methods of pest control.

In the mid-20th century, synthetic pesticides found a foothold in agricultural practices. The first synthetic organochlorine, DDT (dichlorodiphenyl-trichloroethane), was discovered in 1939 and opened a Pandora?s Box of toxic chemicals. Other organochlorine insecticides followed: benzene hexachloriade (BHC), chlordane, toxaphene, heptachlor, aldrin, dieldrin, endrin, endosulfan, and isobensan. These chemicals act on an insect?s nervous system causing malfunctions and tremors that bring about an insect?s eventual death.

After years of watching these toxins move up the food chain, countries started to ban these organochlorines from use in 1973. It was discovered that organochlorines are insoluble chemicals that persist in the soil. Eventually, they are absorbed by plants which are eaten by small critters which are consumed by larger predators. This dangerous and fatal cycle brought about the near elimination of many animal species and the increase of cancers in humans.

In the early 1960s, a holistic approach to pest control was proposed. This concept, coined as Integrated Pest Management, was introduced by the US Academy of Sciences in 1969. Integrated pest management teaches that pest problems can be reduced by understanding a pest?s life cycle, determining a pest?s natural enemies, developing disease and pest resistant plants, and applying cultural and physical controls to pest eradication.

To learn more about Integrated Pest Management and how you can easily integrated these pest managment techniques in your garden, visit The Grocery Garden [1]...

Happy Gardening!

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