



# ORGANIC LANDCARE

## 4 STEPS TO NATURAL PEST CONTROL

BY MICAH BARKER

**T**here are the four steps I use to remove insect pest infestations from high end resort landscapes — for GOOD! That's right, when you use this approach, you'll never have to treat again with a chemical control — and I mean NEVER.

The secret is in identifying and treating the root of your problem — the reason why the insects are there in the first place. That would be a whole article in itself so let's stay focused on the four steps you can do tomorrow to be successful in Organic Landcare.

Number One — Removal. Prune and remove as much of the heavily infested

plant material as possible, such as leaves, stalks, branches, palm fronds that are infested with pests like whitefly, mealy bug, black sooty mold, and scale. Wash off remaining plant materials — spray with a hose, blast with water, get the insects moving off of your plants — disrupt them.

Next take a look at your plant place-



Once the planting scheme is correct, it's time for step two: organic control measures that are planet, people, and pet safe. First I treat with a soap water solution such as Dr. Bonner's Peppermint soap at 1oz. per gallon of water. Soak the plant down, especially the undersides of the leaves, be thorough and meticulous. Insects breath through their skin and the soapy water acts as a film, suffocating them, you must coat the insects to be effective. Some insects such as mealy bugs actually build up a waxy water-repellent coating over their bodies to resist this as well as all chemical control measures.

Three days after your soapy water treatment, apply a neem oil solution at a ratio of 1oz. per gallon of water with a teaspoon of soap as an emulsifier. Mix well, soak the plant down and be sure to coat the entire plant surface. Neem oil contains a potent natural chemical called *Azadirachtin*, which not only kills insects by making them stop feeding, it also slows down reproduction and acts as a short term repellent. Caution!!! Neem

is toxic to honey bees, best to apply when bees are not active at cool times of the day like early morning or late afternoon. Neem can also burn plants if applied directly in the sun so be sure to wait until a less sunny time.

Rotate applications of soapy water, Neem, and optionally a third alternative such as chili water or a botanical oil weekly until active populations have subsided. This method will effectively knock down the pest population within 6 weeks, but to keep them away for GOOD, there are two more essential steps to permanently eliminate insect pest problems from your organic landscape. Check back next issue for the second part of this how to Organic Landcare article...



*Micah Barker runs the organic landscape company Bioscape Hawaii, and also serves as Secretary on the HILA Board of Directors.*



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ment, identify if there are any plants that are in the wrong location. Some plants which love to be in the sun are inappropriately placed under the shade of a tree or on the north side of the building — these must go somewhere else. A weak, unhealthy plant can harbor an ongoing pest population which can lead to later re-infestation.