

# NATURAL PEST CONTROL

## STEPS TO A ORGANIC LAND CARE PEST CONTROL PROGRAM

BY MICAH BARKER

If you've worked in Hawaii's Resort Landscape industry for awhile, you may have realized that despite our very best efforts at controlling or eliminating insect pests from our plants, whether chemical or organic, the pests always seem to return.

Over the past eleven years of designing, installing, and managing landscapes, I have finally found success in achieving a landscape completely free from pest infestation - and the best part is - absolutely NO chemicals are required. In fact, for best results - exclude the use of ALL chemical inputs - herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, and even chemical fertilizers, because they all negatively impact soil life and beneficial predatory insects. Healthy SOIL LIFE is one of the secrets to developing a landscape that is TOTALLY PEST FREE, and your clients will LOVE you not only for the beauty and vibrance of their property but especially for not applying any potentially hazardous and toxic materials on their landscape that may increase their risk of cancer and disease.

Last issue I shared the first 2 steps of my 4 step process, Step 1: remove heavily infested plant materials and make sure plants are well suited for their location - move or eliminate them if not. Step 2: treat the remaining pest population with organic, non-toxic controls such as neem oil solution and soapy water solution. Always rotate applications of your chosen organic controls. Refrain from using chemical controls, they will continually set back your progress by killing off beneficial predatory insects already living in your landscape.

Rather than more control measures,



PHOTOS: MICAH BARKER

the next two steps are fundamental cornerstones of an organic land care program in Hawai'i - here comes the coveted TRADE SECRET, and I share it with you today in hopes that you will try out a new approach, experiment, find what works for you and relinquish those chemicals for the benefit and safety of us all.

Firstly, a daily watering schedule (especially overhead spray) in a hot dry climate will 100% guaranteed create

the perfect warm-humid conditions for molds, fungal disease and explosive plant growth - all undesirable for landscapes in an arid climate. Instead of watering daily, get that program down to 2x and at the most 4x per week. It's simple, just add up the total amount of time a station needs for 1 week. Example: 7 min/day = 49 min/wk. Divide the product by the number of desired run times per week, let's say 3. Now set the station to run for



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ly absorbed directly through the leaf surfaces immediately in-creasing plant health, vigor, resistance and beauty. The benefits are to numerous to fit here and the science surrounding the depth and breadth of soil-plant-microbial associations is vast and still developing, but I can tell you with utmost certainty - THIS WORKS.

What I have presented here is the culmination of a decade of experience and study, but the real treasure in all of this is YOU, and it always will be. You are vital to what's going on, and it is your choice to make a change, I can only make it easy, available, and within reach, but you must reach out and grab it. All great change starts first in our own backyard.



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16min. at 3 times per week. Simple, easy, everyone can do it and the pest infestations will hate you for this.

Finally, let's develop plant immunity and resistance. A plant that is well suited for it's location, watered properly, and resistant to pests - WONT BE INFESTED. Sure, during the wet season a few insect pests might show up here and there, but scantily, and this never leads to infestation and ongoing control in my experience.

So how do we grow resistant plants? We start by putting LIFE back into the soil and onto the plant surfaces with once per month applications of Actively Aerated Vermi-Compost Tea, which is an aerobic compost tea made with worm castings and high quality compost. We apply this at the rate of 1 gal./75 sqft. to the ENTIRE landscape soaking all plants, trees, ground covers, and even the turf grass. Beneficial microbes in the compost tea help by digesting sugary exudates on the leaf surface further reducing food supply for unwanted pests like black sooty mold and sap sucking insects. The compost tea drips profusely off of the leaves and into the soil, super-charging it with trillions upon trillions of beneficial bacteria, fungi, and protozoa. Furthermore, key trace minerals and nutrients, pre-digested in the worm gut, are made many times more available to the plant and readi-

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