

What You Need to Know About Mosquitos in Maryland

Do mosquitos play a beneficial role in the environment?

Believe it or not, they do. They are an important food source for many predators including dragonflies, fish, birds, and frogs. There are almost 200 species of mosquitos found in North America and 59 of these live in Maryland. Yet only **three** species pose a real concern because of the diseases they can spread.



Figure 1: James Gathany/CDC Wikimedia Commons

- 1) This is the **Asian tiger mosquito** (*Aedes albopictus*). Note its black and white striped body. **It is active during the DAY!** It can transmit yellow fever, Zika, dengue, chikungunya, and encephalitis. **All they need is a bottle cap full of water that remains stagnant for up to a week to complete their life cycle.**



Figure 2: Rafael Wikimedia Commons

- 2) This is the **yellow fever mosquito** (*Aedes aegypti*). Note its horizontal posture. **It is also active during the DAY!** It can transmit yellow fever, Zika, dengue, and chikungunya. It also needs only a little bit of water to complete its life cycle. **It is another container breeder.**



Figure 3: Jesto Wikimedia Commons

- 3) This is the **common house mosquito** (*Culex pipiens*). Note it is brown rather than black like the other two mosquitos. **It is active at NIGHT!** It can transmit West Nile virus and encephalitis. **It prefers permanent pools of stagnant water to complete its life cycle.**

Other important mosquito facts:

- Only female mosquitos bite.
- Mosquitos hibernate over the winter. Once the temperatures rise above 60°F, they wake up and come out.
- Mosquitos can be active between April and October.
- The Asian tiger mosquito has a range of only about 300 feet. However, some mosquitoes can travel up to three miles.
- Mosquitos find you by sensing movement, infra-red radiation emanating from warm bodies, and carbon dioxide and sweat.
- Females need blood to help their eggs develop. They can lay up to 300 eggs.

Easy Things You Can Do to Control Mosquitos in Your Yard

Remember all it takes is a bottle cap filled with water so you need to find places where water can hide. Here are some suggestions for where to look and what to do:

- Empty anything that might collect water including children's and pets' toys, wading pools, used tires, buckets, bicycles, wheelbarrows, canoes, boats, garbage can lids, recycling containers, trash, other kinds of containers, etc.
- Folds in tarps and plastic sheeting can hold water. Try to get them as flat as you can and be sure to remove any standing water at least once a week.
- Empty and clean birdbaths and trays under potted plants once a week.
- Since mosquitos hate moving water, use a fountain or aerator in birdbaths and ornamental ponds.
- Maintain all water spigots and window air conditioners. That nasty drip which creates a puddle also provides a place where mosquitos can breed.
- Make sure your gutters and down spouts are clean and there is no standing water. One key place mosquitos like to breed are those corrugated gutter drains. Cover with nylon stockings or use smooth PVC pipes.
- Remove pet dishes if not being actively used.

What Not to Do to Control Mosquitos

- Do not use bug "zappers." These kill beneficial insects including bees and other pollinators.
- Do not use mosquito traps. These only attract more mosquitos.
- No plants have been scientifically proven to control mosquitos.
- Biorational larvicide such as Mosquito Dunks or Mosquito Torpedoes are safe to use, but only after you have tried everything else mentioned above.
- **Most importantly, DO NOT USE INSECTICIDES** unless you have tried all other options, and you still have a problem. Then, only use them sparingly.

Important Resources

Maryland Department of Agriculture

https://mda.maryland.gov/plants-pests/Pages/mosquito_control.aspx

University of Maryland Extension Service

<https://extension.umd.edu/resource/controlling-mosquitoes>



For more information about a variety of environmentally sustainable practices, please see our webpage:

<https://www.greenmiddletown.com/sustainability-committee>