

HERBAL LIVING

Better Living Through Plants
Herbal Remedies for Bug Bites
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During the summertime, the living is easy; but what is the only unfortunate part about summer? Bug bites. Apparently, I have sweet-tasting blood that mosquitoes love to dive into, causing tons of bug bites all summer long. Repelling insects is a crucial strategy during the summer, especially to gardeners. Fortunately, there are great herbal bug repellent and itch-relief remedies that can easily be made at home. Be careful! First, try allergy tests to see how your skin reacts to some of these strong herbs.

Antiseptic Insect Repellent Skin Oil

- 1/2 cup almond, walnut or grapeseed oil
- 6 drops oregano, thyme or tea tree oil
- 4 drops each of up to four insect repellent oils (See below for list of insect repellent oils)

1. Add oil to a small clean bottle, preferably dark glass. Drop in the essential oils of your choice and shake well.
2. Label and keep in a dark, cool place.

Insect Repellent Neat's-foot Oil

This is Tina's recipe for applying to leather work boots, which conditions the boots and helps repel insects.

- 1/2 teaspoon each orange, eucalyptus and citronella essential oils
- 7.5-ounce bottle neat's-foot oil (available in sporting goods stores)

1. Add the essential oils to the neat's-foot oil bottle and shake well.
2. Apply to boots as directed on bottle.

You can also try these two vinegar formulas. Use them separate or mixed together:

Herbal Insect Repellent Vinegar

You can pour vinegars into spray bottles for easy application.

- 2 cups fresh insect-repellent herbs
- 2 cups apple cider vinegar

1. Crush herbs with a mortar and pestle. Place herbs in a glass quart jar and cover with vinegar. Use a plastic lid to seal the jar (vinegar corrodes metal).
2. Shake every day for 3 to 7 days. Filter vinegar within a week and use within the year.

Jewelweed Vinegar

*Jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*) grows in the wild, wet places in the eastern United States. The juice of the plant is a traditional remedy for all sorts of skin ailments. To use it, simply crush the leaves and stems and rub the juice on itchy spots. To preserve and keep it handy, make this vinegar.*

- 1 cup fresh crushed jewelweed
- 2 cups apple cider vinegar

1. Place jewelweed in glass quart jar. Cover with vinegar and seal with a plastic lid. You can leave the herb in for up to four weeks. Pour vinegar through a cheesecloth-lined strainer.

2. We add insect-repellent and antiseptic essential oils to the vinegar, 10 drops to a one-pint sprayer. Vinegars are good for about a year.

Gardener's Foot Powder

- 1/4 cup cornstarch
- 1/4 cup baking soda
- 10 drops each lavender and tea tree oils

1. Put cornstarch and baking soda in a jar; add essential oils and stir.

Insect-Repellent Oils and Herbs

Dilute these oils in a carrier, such as vinegar, witch hazel or a skin-nourishing oil (olive, almond, grapeseed, sesame or walnut) to deter mosquitoes, chiggers, gnats, ticks and biting flies.

East Indian lemongrass (*Cymbopogon flexuosus*)
Eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*)
Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia* and *L. Ƴintermedia*)
Lemon thyme (*Thymus Ƴcitriodorus*)
Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum albescens*)
Orange peel (*Citrus sinensis*)
Citronella (*Cymbopogon nardus*)
Patchouli (*Pogostemon cablin*)
Vetiver (*Chrysopogon zizanioides*)
Sandalwood (*Santalum album*)

Antiseptic Essential Oils and Herbs

Calendula
Eucalyptus
Garlic
Goldenseal
Lavender
Lemongrass
Oregano
Patchouli
Rose geranium
Rosemary
Tea tree
Thyme
Vetiver
Yarrow

Astringent Herbs

An astringent herb dries tissue and reduces discharge and secretions. Most astringents contain tannins.

Comfrey
Plantain
Yarrow