

The Green Notebook

Greening Your Insect Repellent

If you'd like to avoid some of the stronger chemicals in traditional insect repellents, like DEET and some other phthalates, here are some options. Remember, though, that these sprays need to be reapplied more often.

On the website Care2.com, a post by Annie B. Bond gave a home-made recipe for repellents using essential oils. The basic recipe calls for 1 to 25 drops of essential oil, 2 tbs of vegetable or olive oil, and 1 tbs of aloe vera gel (optional). Combine in a glass jar and shake to blend. Apply by dabbing a few drops on skin and/or clothing. (Caution: pregnant women should always consult a doctor before using). Bond recommends the following essential oils for particular bugs (mix a bottle for each bug problem):

Ticks: rose geranium (first choice); palmerosa, bay, eucalyptus

Mosquitoes: Pennyroyal, lemon balm (citronella), thyme, lavender

Black flies: sassafras, lavender, eucalyptus, cedar, peppermint

The Daily Green website made some recommendations of more natural repellents on the market now. You could probably find some of these at Pure-n-Simple Health Food Store in Delaware, Raisin Rack in Westerville or Whole Foods in Dublin or check with your local grocer as many of them might carry at least one alternative brand. Daily Green mentioned: California Baby Natural Bug Blend, Aubrey Organics Gone, Badger Anti-bug Balm, Kiss My Face Swy Flotter, Repel Lemon Eucalyptus Repellent, and Bite Blocker Herbal Wipes. The Delaware County Community Market sells a repellent made by a local company called The Delaware Candle and Soap Company.

To find out more about natural repellents and how they are rated for toxicity, log onto the Environmental Working Group website and search their Skin Deep database for insect repellents (www.ewg.org).

The best strategy is to dress to avoid the bites and not to don any perfumes, lotions and other fragrances that make you smell appetizing. Also, consider using citronella candles, mosquito traps and other non-toxic repellents, then you can avoid the sprays altogether.

Good luck at keeping the bugs at bay!

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