PEST CONTROL

The following notes are based mostly on online research and RGC members' personal experience using organic practices. Some members recommend Jerry Baker's book, "Backyard Problem Solver," as a source for natural solutions to garden problems.

Animal Pests

Animals may be kept out with fencing but this is a significant undertaking if the fence adds to, rather than detracts from, the garden's beauty. An alternative is to spray the vulnerable plants with a repellent. There are many products available, some work better than others. Liquid Plantskyd may be the most effective for rabbits and deer but is rather unpleasant to apply (wear gloves), and should be kept in the fridge after opening (to stop it fermenting). Many garden centers provide lists of plants that deer and rabbits avoid.

Voles are also an issue in many Cape Ann gardens and their feeding on plant roots can cause serious damage. Non-lethal repellents are effective in encouraging these pests to move elsewhere and include ground stakes that emit a pulsing beep, and powder repellents containing castor oil, both available at most garden centers.

Insect Pests

<u>First Line of Defense</u>

- Wash off aphids and other small insects with a jet of water
- Remove larger insects and eggs on the underside of leaves by hand
- Use traps when applicable (e.g., Japanese beetle traps)
- Encourage native predators and parasites
- Cover plants with floating row covers
- Apply hot-pepper or garlic repellent sprays

<u>Pesticides</u>

These are recommended for use if the above approaches fail to control an infestation.

Be aware that some organic, natural pesticides, such as pyrethrum and Spinosad, are highly toxic to all insects. Although instructions are to spray after the bees have gone to bed, this is hard to do without artificial lighting. Furthermore, they need to be sprayed on the insects to be controlled, which also go to bed at dark.

Aphids, flea beetles, spider mites, whitefly etc.:

spray with Neem oil or horticultural soap (controls population of pests). These pesticides mostly affect insects with soft bodies, but should not be sprayed

directly on a pollinator, other beneficial insect or spider. Other approaches include using a damp, slightly soapy (gentle dishwash liquid) paper towel to wipe off aphids; spray water directly on foliage and leaf crotches to reduce spider mite as they prefer hot, dry conditions; sticky traps are available to lure and catch whitefly

Leaf miners:

remove infected sections of leaves, bag and place in the trash (not compost), then spray both sides of remaining leaves with Neem oil

Slugs:

Minimize places for slugs to hide during the daytime (damp, dark, cool like under rocks)
Sprinkle Bonide Slug Magic pellets around the plants (somewhat effective)
Or use beer traps (place a saucer of beer beneath an affected plant)

Winter Moth eggs:

Spray plants with dormant oil in March (reduces egg population)

Caterpillars – cabbageworms, winter moth, gypsy moth:

Spray both sides of leaves of affected plants with Thuricide (BT), which is a liquid formulation of bacteria that kills only caterpillars eating treated leaves. Consequently, it is important only to spray those plants where there is an infestation of the caterpillars that need to be controlled, as it will also kill other caterpillars such as swallowtail butterflies (e.g., on parsley), and Monarchs (on milkweed).

Spotted wing drosophila fruit fly (attacks all soft fruit, especially strawberries, raspberries and blackberries):

Starting in the spring, before the flowers open, place traps made from a lidded disposable plastic cold drink or yogurt container (preferably transparent), with 1/8th-inch holes bored in the sides starting two to three inches above the base, and filled with one inch of cider vinegar with a drop of scentless dish detergent.
Spray growing fruit clusters with Srills Fruit Fly Bully

Fungal Infections

For powdery mildew, rose black spot, clematis wilt etc.:

Remove infected leaves and stems and place in trash, then spray both sides of leaves with a fungicide

Note: fungicides are somewhat effective, but more as a preventative before infection.

Fungal and virus infections are hard to control by any means and sometimes you just have to accept them.