

# Second

## NATURE



Supporting a greener environment through renewable energy

Presorted  
Standard  
US Postage  
PAID  
Permit # 44  
Madison, WI

# Bug Off!



## 30,000!

That's how many Lyme disease infections are caused by tick bites every year. What's more, the mosquito-borne West Nile virus causes 600 potentially fatal brain infections a year (source: National Public Radio).

With as wet as it's been so far this year, it could be a banner year for pesky insects. While it's impossible to completely stay away from the woods and bodies of water, we can make things difficult for the little biters.

When you can, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts. Pull socks over pant cuffs, and wear a hat or scarf. Drape inexpensive soft window screen netting over strollers to keep mosquitos and ticks off babies.



### Repel bugs from the inside out

If you can stomach it, drink a tablespoon or two of organic apple cider vinegar and eat lots of garlic to repel mosquitoes and ticks. Another nutritional method that might be easier on the palate – take a vitamin B1 pill daily.

### Repellent soap

Repel bugs before you even leave the shower with a bug-repellent soap. Simply wash your body thoroughly before and after spending time outdoors.

### Essential oils as natural insect repellent

Start by mixing 10-15 drops of your favorite insect-repelling essential oil (lemon balm, pennyroyal, lavender, or rose geranium) with one ounce of a fruit oil or nut oil. Then simply dab a dot of your mixture at an exposed area where you might get bitten, and then get a few more areas while you're at it. If you find you're still getting bitten, dab on a bit more oil. What works for people works for dogs and cats as well. Simply put one drop on their collar each week.

### Natural Bug Repellent Body Soap

- 10-15 drops of **one** of the following essential oils (lemon balm, pennyroyal, lavender, or rose geranium)
- 1 oz. liquid Castile soap (like Dr. Bronner's).
- Mix well and use as a body wash.

### Natural Bug Repellent Recipe #1

- 10-25 drops essential oil (lavender, rose geranium, peppermint, cajuput, or citronella)
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- ½ teaspoon coriander seeds
- 1 tablespoon aloe vera gel (optional)

Combine ingredients in a glass jar, stir to blend. Dab a few drops on your skin or clothing.

### Natural Bug Repellent Recipe #2

- 25 drops essential oil (lavender, rose geranium, peppermint, cajuput, or citronella)
- 1/4 cup water or organic apple cider vinegar

Combine the ingredients in a glass jar. Shake to blend. Dab some on your skin or clothing.

## How to plant a money tree

Trees make your home more beautiful – that you know. But you might not realize that they can also help lower your heating and cooling costs by as much as (drumroll, please) 25 percent. That equates to an average monthly savings of about \$21 for the average Alliant Energy homeowner. So what are you waiting for – start planting! Here are some tips:

- Plant shade trees on the west and east sides of your home.
- Plant bushes and shrubs next to your house to help insulate.
- Plant evergreens on the north and west sides to deflect the wind.



Large shade trees (at maturity) planted on the west side of houses provide the highest energy savings, followed by large trees on the east, then south, then evergreen trees on the north and west.

Need more reasons to plant energy efficiently? A tree-shaded yard can be up to six degrees cooler than a sunny yard. A shaded lawn can be up to 25 degrees cooler than sunny pavement. That could mean a lot of comfort on those hot summer days! Another tip to remember when working in your yard – trim around your natural gas and electric meter so our technicians can easily access your meters.

A great place to get affordable landscaping trees is through Alliant Energy's *Operation ReLeaf* program, which takes place every spring and fall in our Iowa service territory. *Operation ReLeaf* offers residential customers in Iowa the opportunity to purchase landscaping trees for only \$25 each.

These high-quality trees usually retail for \$125 or more. Varieties often include maples, birches, crabapples, and evergreens. The

# \$21

The average amount of money you can save each month on heating and cooling costs with mature, well-placed trees around your home.

(source: *energy.gov* and Alliant Energy)

next *Operation ReLeaf* event takes place in September and October, 2013, in the following eight Iowa counties: Clinton, Dallas, Des Moines, Fayette, Linn, Marshall, Washington, and Worth. You don't have to reside in the distribution county to purchase trees, but you do have to be a residential customer of Alliant Energy in Iowa. Also, you must be willing to pick up your tree(s) (limit of two) on the day of distribution in your designated location.

# Bugs biting? Plant these.

There is more than one way to repel a bug. Sometimes it's more about what you plant in your garden and in your planters that determines what keeps the mosquitoes away. Here are some ideas to get you started.



## Citronella

Often used in mosquito-repelling candles and torches, citronella and its distinct aroma makes it hard for mosquitos to find you. The living plant is even more effective than any citronella product you can buy in the store, because it has a stronger scent.

In the Midwest, citronella can be grown in large pots or planters. Put it in a pot with casters, so it can be rolled indoors during winter – it is a perennial. This clumping grass grows to a height of five to six feet. During the spring, summer and fall, keep it out on your patio to keep the mosquitos at bay.

Citronella plants are considered low maintenance, like most grasses, and they do best in full sun and well-drained locations.

Periodic applications of nitrogen-rich fertilizers will ensure vigorous growth, but this treatment only needs to be applied once a year, preferably in early spring.

When purchasing citronella, look for the true varieties, *Cytopogon nardus* or *Citronella winterianus*. Other plants may be sold as 'citronella scented', but these do not have the mosquito repelling qualities of true citronella.

## Horsemint

Also known as Beebalm, Horsemint is an adaptable perennial plant which repels mosquitoes much the same as citronella. It gives off a strong incense-like odor which confuses mosquitoes by masking the smell of its usual hosts.

Horsemint is a fast growing, shade-tolerant and drought-resistant plant which reaches a height and width of two to three feet. It does well in dry, sandy soil. Horsemint can also be planted in pots for moving indoors in cold climate zones. Horsemint leaves can be dried and used to make herbal tea. Its flowers will also attract bees and butterflies to your garden.



## Marigolds

Marigolds are a common, hardy annual plant with a distinctive scent that mosquitoes and some gardeners find offensive. What you might not know is that Marigolds naturally contain Pyrethrum, a compound used in many insect repellents.

Marigolds prefer full sunlight and reasonably fertile soil. Flowers should be dead-headed to promote additional blooms. Potted marigolds can be positioned near entrances to deter mosquitoes. But be aware that bright blooms may attract wasps.

Marigolds and tomato plants make great partners. Besides repelling mosquitoes, marigolds repel insects that prey on tomatoes.

Plant them together to see a great relationship take root.

## Ageratum

You may know ageratum as Flossflowers. This plant emits a scent called coumarin which mosquitos find offensive. Coumarin is commonly used in commercial mosquito repellants.

This low-lying ornamental plant reaches heights of eight – 18", and is easily recognized by its blue flowers, although there are varieties with pink, white and violet blooms. This plant will thrive in full or partial sun and does not require rich soil.



## Catnip

Catnip, *Nepeta cataria*, is a natural mosquito repellent. Iowa State University reports that catnip is ten times more effective than DEET, the chemical found in most commercial insect repellents.

Catnip is very easy to grow. This perennial herb is related to mint, and grows readily both as a weed and a commercially cultivated plant. While catnip will repel mosquitoes in close proximity to the plant, some people apply crushed catnip leaves or catnip oil for more robust protection. Bear in mind that cats will respond to you similarly as they would respond to the plant itself. Cat owners may want to choose an alternative plant for repelling mosquitoes.

## Cut down on waste: sign up for Paperless Billing

Each year, more and more people are reducing their use of our natural resources. Help cut down on wasted paper by signing up for Alliant Energy's *Paperless Billing*. Currently more than 128,000 customers have signed up, and their willingness to view their bills online saves approximately 10 tons of paper, roughly equivalent to 240 trees, each year.

You can enroll in *Paperless Billing* today through your online account. All you need to enroll is a recent Alliant Energy utility bill.

- If you already manage your account online, log in.
- If you're new to our free online services, you must sign up to manage your account online at [alliantenergy.com/myaccount](http://alliantenergy.com/myaccount).
- Follow the simple on-screen instructions.

*Paperless Billing* provides additional convenience and control. When you sign up for *Paperless Billing*, we'll send you an email every



month when your bill is ready. This online access is free, easy, fast and secure. Many features are available:

- Get your current balance and payment history
- Review 18 months of your energy usage
- Pay your bill online
- Start or stop service

After your enrollment is confirmed, you'll receive your first electronic bill at the end of your next full billing cycle.

*Paperless Billing* is:

- **Convenient:** Always right there in your email, ready when you are.
- **Secure:** Your billing activity is private and secure
- **Clutter-free:** No envelopes to keep track of, no stamps to buy

Just log on, view your bill and schedule your payment - it's fast, easy and secure, and paper-free.

# Safer Sunning

More than 1 million new cases of skin cancer are diagnosed in the U.S. every year (source: [cancer.org](http://cancer.org)). Prevention means blocking the sun's harmful UVB and UVA radiation.

But there's a better way than bathing yourself in heavy doses of on oxybenzone, which some think could possibly disrupt the human hormonal system, and vitamin A (retinyl palmitate), which could boost skin cancer risk. Both are ingredients in some traditional sunscreens.

Of course, the most natural sunscreen is a tree, or maybe a hat. But next to that is sunscreen made with organic and mineral agents, free of ingredients with the long, scientific names mentioned above. The only issue – sometimes these natural sunscreens can be costly.

Thankfully, there are some affordable options out there – and we've found them! Here's a list of the more effective and pocketbook-friendly natural sunblocks on the market (source: [thedailygreen.com](http://thedailygreen.com)), and what you might expect to pay for them. The key active ingredient in these natural sunblocks is zinc or titanium.

1. Jason Mineral Sunblock (\$11.49 for 5 oz.)
2. Alba Botanica (\$19.99 for 8 oz.)
3. Earth's Best Mineral Sunblock (\$12.43 for 4 oz.)
4. MexiTan/Tropical Sands (\$17.50 for 8 oz.)
5. Nature's Gate (\$9.35 for 4 oz.)



The *Second Nature* newsletter is published semiannually for participants in Alliant Energy's Second Nature renewable energy program. Participants receive two printed issues via postal mail. All issues are available online at [alliantenergy.com/secondnaturenews](http://alliantenergy.com/secondnaturenews).

Phone: 1-800-ALLIANT (1-800-255-4268) Fax: (319) 786-4043. Email: [secondnature@alliantenergy.com](mailto:secondnature@alliantenergy.com)

Please direct questions, comments and story ideas to the email address above. If you prefer to receive this newsletter via email, send us a message at the email address above. Be sure to include "Second Nature E-Newsletter" in the subject line and remember to add your Alliant Energy account name and service address.

FPO-Landscape  
Replace with FSC Logo At  
Suttle-Straus  
Place at 100% only