Mosquitoes don’t have to ruin summer



Learn to control annoying mosquitoes. Photo/James Gathany/CDC

By Melinda Myers

Don’t let disease-carrying mosquitoes keep you indoors this summer. Instead, employ these eight tips to protect yourself and manage these pests in your yard.

- Do a bit of yard and garden clean up. Remove weeds, manage neglected gardens and keep the lawn properly mowed to reduce resting spaces for adult mosquitoes.
- Eliminate standing water where mosquitoes breed. Drain water that collects in buckets, kids toys, tarps, pool covers, clogged gutters and downspouts. Clear the gutters and downspouts so water can drain freely. Store items that tend to collect water in a shed or garage.
- Evaluate drainage patterns in your landscape. Improve drainage by amending the soil with organic matter. Install French drains, drain tiles and other drainage systems if needed. Or turn it into a water feature. Consult your municipality first for any relevant guidelines and restrictions.
- Manage water in birdbaths, fountains, ponds and rain

barrels. Change water weekly in birdbaths and wading pools. Add a pump to keep water moving and prevent breeding. Or use an organic mosquito control in rain barrels and water features.

- Add a fan to your outdoor décor. The gentle breeze keeps these weak flying insects away. Consider taking one to the garden when weeding.
- Provide short-term relief when entertaining outdoors with the help of citronella oil or scented candles. Scatter lots of these throughout the area and within a few feet of your guests.
- Cover as much of your skin as possible with loose fitting, light colored clothing. Mosquitoes are less attracted to the lighter colors and can't readily reach your skin through loose clothing.
- Further protect yourself from disease-carrying mosquitoes by using a personal repellent. For those looking to avoid DEET, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention has also approved products with the active ingredient picaridin, IR3535, and the synthetic oil of lemon and eucalyptus. Avoid products that contain both sunscreen and insect repellents as you need to apply the sunscreen more often than the repellent.

Implement some of these strategies and then get ready to enjoy the outdoors mosquito-free all season.

Gardening expert Melinda Myers has more than 30 years of horticulture experience and has written more than 20 gardening books, including "Small Space Gardening" and the "Midwest Gardener's Handbook".