

Use these plants and herbs to keep bugs away, NJ garden centers say

By Dino Flammia May 10, 2017 10:00 PM



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Coppola's Garden Center, South Plainfield

Are you sick of pests invading your lawn and personal space? There are some natural ways to limit the impact of certain animals and biting insects; it just helps to have a green thumb.

We reached out to a few gardening gurus in New Jersey for their tips on what you could add to your property that may lead to a summer of less shoeing and fewer mosquito bites.

“Ever since the Zika virus, everybody’s looking to keep mosquitoes out of their yard,” said Bob Rossi, manager of Coppola’s Garden Center in South Plainfield.

And fortunately, these bloodsuckers are apparently turned off by more plants and herbs than most other insects.

Get your hands on any of the following items to limit the mosquito chaos:

- Citronella plant
- Lemongrass
- Basil
- Lavender
- Lemon thyme
- Lemon verbena
- Lemon balm
- Mint
- Rosemary

Craig Fodor, an employee at Amato’s Garden Center in South Brunswick, noted a number of scents that are pleasant to humans don’t treat pests the same way.

Citronella plants, he said, smell “just like Trix cereal.”

“It smells really fruity and it smells really good, but for the mosquitoes — they just don’t like it,” Fodor said.

Select items listed above can also limit the intrusion of bugs beyond mosquitoes. Bay leaves can repel flies. Oregano, chives and petunias are known to have an effect on certain beetle species.

According to Alex Lim, owner of Holly Brook Farms Garden Center in Wall, most critters enjoy parsley. So don’t add that to your lineup of insect-repelling herbs.

Marigolds can keep small animals at bay as well, Rossi added. Bird and deer netting are available at the South Plainfield establishment, along with catnip, which Rossi says can also repel mosquitoes.

Certain plants are considered “deer-resistant,” but if a deer is hungry enough, it will eat mostly anything. The New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, within the Rutgers network, **lists the landscape plants** most and least likely to be damaged by deer. The group recommends that plants such as tulips, rhododendrons and strawberries be planted with additional protection such as fencing and repellents.

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