

# Take Back Your Backyard

Submitted by Anne Reed

Living in Andover certainly has its benefits. The peacefulness, the beautiful wooded areas, lakes and ponds make it a wonderful place to live. But all this nature also comes with a few challenges. Specifically, ticks and mosquitoes.

Few things will make our skin crawl more than finding a tick on our children, pets or ourselves. And nothing keeps us from enjoying an evening outside more than being eaten alive by mosquitoes! How often are we not enjoying the long awaited summer activities because of these pests? But besides being a nuisance, these bugs can transmit disease. Did you know that the mosquito is considered the deadliest animal in the world? And, of course, Lyme disease is carried by the dreaded deer tick.

By taking proactive measures now, you can help safeguard you and your family. Ticks live and breed in shady, cool, moist areas. Here are some ways to assuage these insects and protect yourself:



Mosquitoes only need a capful of water to lay their eggs. A female will lay several hundred eggs in one batch and she will usually lay one to three batches during her lifetime. By reducing their breeding grounds, you will reduce the population. Here's how you can do this:



- 1 Avoid wooded areas with dense shrubs, high grass and a lot of leaves, as these are places where ticks are likely to live.
- 2 If you hike in the woods, stay to the center of the trail to avoid overgrown vegetation.
- 3 Make your yard less attractive to ticks: mow lawns, clear brush, and remove leaf litter and pine needles. Keep wood piles away from gathering places and your house.
- 4 Keep ground under bird feeders clear and move it away from your house as mice (carriers) will eat the fallen seed.
- 5 Restrict the use of ground cover that attracts deer.
- 6 Keep cats and dogs out of the woods and brush.
- 7 Keep playground equipment, decks and patios away from yard edges and trees and, if possible, place them on recycled rubber mulch.
- 8 When outdoors, apply EPA-registered insect repellent on exposed skin and clothing according to the instructions on the label. Deet may be used on skin and permethrin should only be used on clothing and outdoor gear.
- 9 Cover up. Wear long, solid and light colored clothing with pants tucked into socks. This will help prevent ticks from getting under your clothes and attaching to your skin.
- 10 Check and inspect to remove ticks from your clothes before going indoors. Wash your clothes with hot water and dry them using high heat for at least one hour.

- 1 In ponds, add mosquito-eating fish like bluegills, minnows, gambusia and/or green sunfish.
- 2 Eliminate or reduce breeding sites by replacing all standing water once a week (bird baths) and remove or dump any unnecessary standing water – children's toys, buckets, flower pots, pet dishes, garbage cans, unused lawn chairs/ornaments, old tires, etc. Drill holes in tire swings.
- 3 Clean out gutters and drains. Debris can clog and obstruct water flow from your roof, causing gutters to fill up with standing water.
- 4 Maintain your swimming pool and keep it chlorinated. Pool covers should be cleaned and kept dry as well.
- 5 Adjust sprinklers to prevent overwatering, which can create ideal conditions for mosquito breeding.
- 6 Throw away or store any items that can accumulate standing water. If these items are used frequently, such as wheelbarrows, they should be stored upside-down.



Anne Reed is a certified organic pest control specialist. The information above is based on her research from the Center for Disease Control, The NJ Department of Health on Communicable Disease Service, The American Mosquito Control Association, PestWorld.org and many conversations/discussions she had with a board member of the NJ Pest Management Association. She currently owns and operates Backyard Bug Busters from her home in Andover.