You hear that? That unmistakable buzzing sound of a mosquito as it finds its next meal. Don’t let mosquitoes become the reason you stay inside. Find out what you can do to keep them at bay and still enjoy the great outdoors.

First you need to understand the opponent before you can control it. There are over 50 different species of mosquitoes in Nebraska. These insects are in the same family as flies, gnats, and midges. Just like with butterflies, mosquitoes have four life stages; egg, larvae, pupa, adult. Adults breed and lay eggs in wetlands, stagnant pools of water, or any other location that holds water. Mosquito larvae, also known as wigglers, need moist or wet environments in order to develop form into adults. Calm or still waters are the best environments for wiggler survivability. The good news is that mosquitoes have a lifespan of a whopping two weeks. The bad news is that some species of mosquitoes can have several generations a year. The sex of the mosquito can make a difference on whether or not they will bite. Male mosquitoes feed on nectar while the pesky females feed on blood.

Mosquitoes can do more than just cause you to itch. The adults are vectors, or carriers, of many different diseases in humans including malaria, yellow fever, and West Nile virus. West Nile virus symptoms can range from mild to life threatening. The Culex mosquitoes feed on infected birds, then pass the infection to other animals and humans. Dead birds like blue jays and crows could indicate West Nile virus and should be reported to the local health department. If disposing dead birds, use plastic, rubber or latex gloves and place in a garbage bag and dispose in regular trash.

Mosquito management includes more than just personal repellants. The most important element in mosquito control is removing standing water where mosquitoes breed. Eliminate or treat any standing water in the landscape. Some of the most common residential sites can include; children’s wading pools, rain barrels, birdbaths, drip trays under flower pots, clogged gutters, and discarded tin cans. Standing water should be drained from these areas weekly to prevent mosquitoes from using them for breeding grounds. Birdbaths should be cleaned and rinsed weekly.

There are steps you can take to prevent becoming a mosquitoes’ next meal. Personal repellants are one way to prevent mosquitoes bite. There are several active ingredients that can be used to repel mosquitoes. DEET and picaridin are characterized as conventional repellents. Oil of lemon eucalyptus (PMD) and IR3535 are characterized as biopesticides because they are from natural, organic substances. These active ingredients, when used correctly, are recommended by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) for use in repelling mosquitoes.

BugZappers and other electronic devices might not work as well as one would hope. Mosquito traps emit carbon dioxide that attracts mosquitoes. They often are costly to purchase upfront and just as expensive to maintain for the little benefit that is received. They work best as fringe devices to draw mosquitoes away from human activity. BugZappers are not very effective at controlling mosquitoes. They are not selective for mosquitoes and kill other beneficial insects as well. Mosquitoes make up less than 1% of the insects killed by these devices. Ultrasonic devices do not deter female mosquitoes from attempting to bite, nor do they cause mosquitoes to flee from the sound.

Landscape insecticidal control is another method that can be used in the fight against mosquitoes. Grassy areas, flower borders, small trees and shrubs can be sprayed with labeled insecticide three hours before outdoor parties or events. To control larvae in standing water the bacterial agent *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (Bti) can be used and is specific to mosquito larvae, but is still safe for birds, fish, and mammals. Methoprene is another active ingredient that is used to control larvae. Both Bti and methoprene products are available in a granular or dunk briquette that you put into the water.

Help keep yourself from becoming a mosquito’s next meal. Remove standing water, apply insect repellants and sit back and enjoy the summer.

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