



Kimberly Schofield
Program Specialist-Urban IPM
k-schofield@tamu.edu

Multiplying Mosquitoes

Due to all of the recent rains, we have another flying insect joining us outside: the mosquito. Mosquitoes are a diverse group of flies, and there are over 85 species in Texas.

Mosquitoes develop through a complete lifecycle with an egg, larva, pupa and adult stage. Mosquito eggs may be laid individually or in clusters on the surface of water or in dry locations that will flood periodically. The eggs hatch into larvae that eat microscopic plants, animals and other organic material in the water. The larvae will then develop into pupae, which do not feed. Then the adult stage will emerge from the water and take flight.

Adult male and female mosquitoes will feed on nectar, honeydew and fruit juices. Male mosquitoes will have hairy antennae that they use to locate females. The female mosquito will also consume blood in order to develop her eggs. This causes the female mosquito to be considered one of the biggest medical threats to humans, since they are capable of transmitting many diseases, such as West Nile Virus, Malaria, Eastern Equine Encephalitis, and Yellow Fever.

Some Options For Controlling Mosquito Populations Outdoors:

1) The **number one way to reduce mosquito populations** in your yard is **source reduction!!!** Mosquitoes need as little as a bottle cap full of water in order to complete their lifecycle. If standing water is eliminated in your backyard, then the overall mosquito population in your area will be reduced.

A) Areas containing water should be changed once a week or emptied, such as wading pools, buckets, bird baths, pet dishes, ponds, boat covers, and irrigation systems.

B) Holes or depressions in trees should be filled with sand or mortar.

C) Leaky pipes should be repaired.

D) If standing water can not be drained, then mosquito dunks containing *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (*Bti*) can be used.

2) Mow tall grass and reduce the amount of foliage to reduce the resting sites for adult mosquitoes.

3) Insecticides can be applied to trees and shrubs, such as those containing pyrethrins, to kill adult mosquitoes.

Some options to prevent mosquito bites:

- 1) Avoid wearing dark colors, since mosquitoes rely on visual cues to locate hosts.
- 2) Avoid exercising or yard work in the heat of the day, since mosquitoes are attracted to carbon dioxide and perspiration.
- 3) Avoid wearing fruity or floral fragrances in perfumes, hair products, or sunscreens, since these scents are more attractive to mosquitoes.
- 4) Wear long, loose-fitting clothing to avoid mosquito bites.
- 5) Chemicals can be applied to the skin and clothes to prevent bites. There are many mosquito repellents on the market such as those containing DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, oil of eucalyptus, and soybean oil-based repellents.



Asian tiger mosquito, *Aedes albopictus* (Skuse) (Diptera: Culicidae). Photo by Dr. Bart Drees, Professor and Extension Entomologist.

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