

Home-Made Orchid Remedies and Treatments

One of the major stumbling blocks for beginning orchidists, is that they feel that they must use harsh pesticides to be successful. Many of these are very expensive and must be purchased in quantities that would need to be stored over time. This can cause a potential environmental hazard. Most often, the new orchidists will not have personal protection equipment (eye protection, rubberized rain gear, gloves, and respirator), to properly apply these chemicals.

As a non-commercial orchid grower, it is not necessary to use insecticides and fungicides in a preventative manner. Using these pesticides in this manner can potentially develop resistant strains of these organisms and cause harm to our environment. Since there is no intent to sell or ship the orchids out of state, we can tolerate a few imperfections on the orchids, and still produce high quality flowers. The main goal is to grow and produce beautiful orchid plants and flowers for our own personal enjoyment.

The purpose of this article is to provide easy alternative methods in treating many of the common pests of orchids. To be successful with these methods, they need to be used in conjunction with good cultural practices.

The following are just a few of concoctions that I feel might work in Hawaii. Please remember that you're using them at your own risk, and I take no responsibility for your plants or for any bodily injury!. There has been no scientific study done on application rates, toxicity levels, or target pests. Use with caution and experiment on a few orchids first. Even though these are homemade remedies, personal protection is still important. Use caution when applying. Never apply any of these remedies in the heat of the day as they can potentially burn the soft tissue of the new growths and flower buds of the orchids. Do not store any left over mixtures, doing so in an infraction of federal labeling laws, which require identification and caution statements.

For control of soft bodied insects such as mealy bugs and aphids

1. Straight 70% isopropyl rubbing alcohol - touch insects with a soaked cotton swab or spray entire affected area of plant. Repeat every two to three days. Apply in the early morning or late afternoon, when cool.
2. Garlic/Pepper Spray - liquefy 2 bulbs of garlic and 2 hot peppers in a blender Y; to 2/3 full of water. Strain and add water to make 1 gallon of concentrate. Use 1/4 cup concentrate per gallon of water.

For control of insects that have a hard shell such as scale and thrips.

1. Mix 1 to 3 teaspoons of cooking oil and 1 teaspoon of liquid dishwashing soap into a quart of water. Shake well and spray plant thoroughly wetting the affected surfaces. Repeat every 2 to 3 days. The soap will breakdown the waterproof coating of the insects' shell and the oil will smother them. Apply only when cool.
2. Neem Oil- acts as an insect repellent, as well as a fungicide, nematocide, and even molluscicide!
3. Fantastik or Formula 409 - Mix 1 cup of the household cleaner/degreaser and 1 cup of rubbing alcohol and 2 cups of water, making a quart. Spray directly onto the plants.
4. Orange Plus household cleaner - can be sprayed directly onto the plants.
5. Melt ~ pound of candle wax, then slowly stir 1/4 cup sugar and 4 ounces of Boric Acid Powder. When thoroughly mixed, pour into a pan, creating a 14 to ~" slab. Cut into chunks and distribute around the greenhouse. Keep away from children and animals.

Cinnamon - over the years have been used for all sorts of medicinal applications.

1. Powder - can be applied directly onto the affected part of the plant by dusting heavily.
2. Paste - mix powder with cooking oil to form a thick paste that can be put directly onto the cut parts of the orchid.
3. Spray - combine 2 tablespoons of cinnamon powder into a pint of isopropyl alcohol, shake well and let stand overnight. Filter solution through a coffee filter and use the brown liquid as a spray. It can be used as an all purpose fungicide and is even good for damping off of deflasked seedlings. For a combination fungicide/insecticide - put 1 cup of the cinnamon/alcohol extract into a pint bottle, add 2 tablespoons of dishwashing detergent and top off with water. Use as a spray.
4. Listerine or Hydrogen Peroxide - For crown rot or other infected areas, pour directly onto the infected area and let stand for 5 minutes. Tilt the plant to pour out the excess liquid.
5. Chlorine Bleach - add 1 ounce of household bleach into a gallon of water. Spray directly onto utensils, benches, and even onto the plants. It also helps to control algae.

Slug and Snail Treatments

1. Traps - put a plate or saucer full of fresh beer on the floor, snails and slugs will be attracted to it, fall into it and drown.
2. Spray - Mix left over coffee 50/50 with water or stronger and spray. It seems to work well on the tiny bush snails.
3. Baits - put slices of raw potatoes near the plants. Slugs and snail can be collected in the morning.
4. Barriers - create barriers in your growing areas to prevent slugs and snail from crawling onto the benches. You can put sandpaper, copper foil, Tree Tanglefoot, or even Diatomaceous Earth, onto the legs of the benches.

Spray full strength household vinegar on weeds, repeat daily as needed. This is not to be used for weeds growing in the pots of the orchids. Use only on the greenhouse floor, surrounding areas, walkways, driveways, etc.