HOME AND GARDEN MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

West Nile virus is a disease that can be transmitted to humans by mosquitoes. The virus is carried long distances by infected birds and then spread locally by mosquitoes that bite these birds. Drought conditions may make it worse since birds and mosquitoes will share the same few watering holes, even in backyards. Mosquitoes need still water to lay their eggs, which develop in 7 to 10 days. Eliminate standing water weekly to keep many mosquitoes from breeding in the first place.

It is very rare to catch the virus, and most infected people will not even get sick or will only experience mild flu-like symptoms. However, West Nile virus can be fatal especially to people over 50 years of age. So protect yourself from mosquito bites before doing any outdoor maintenance and while enjoying outdoor activities. Visit www.fightthebitecolorado.com for more information.

Animals  Dogs and cats can become infected, but rarely become ill and do not spread the virus. Keep animal areas dry. Keep food and water bowls clean. A vaccine is available for horses.

Birdbaths  Clean or hose out birdbaths weekly.

BTI  A natural bacteria that kills mosquito and fly larvae yet is non-toxic to animals when used properly. Kills larvae developing in water. (See dunks below.)

Building material  Unused pipe should be kept inside or turned over so that no water accumulates.

Chainlink fence  Cover chainlink fence posts with metal or plastic caps since they are hollow pipes.

Clothing  Wear long sleeved shirts and long pants when working around mosquito infested areas.

Containers  Cover containers or turn upside down so that they do not hold water including: ashtrays, boxes, buckets, cans, cups, jars and pots.

Dawn/Dusk  The times of day that biting mosquitoes are most active since they avoid the heat of day.

Dead birds  Pick up dead birds with a shovel or gloves. Double bag in plastic and dispose in trash. Dead birds should not be handled directly in order to avoid exposure to the virus. Wash your hands thoroughly afterwards.

DEET  The active ingredient in insect repellent. A 10% concentration is recommended for kids.

Drains  Keep outdoor drains flowing freely.

Dripping water  Fix leaky faucets, air conditioners and hoses.

Drought  Drought conditions may help spread the virus since birds and mosquitoes share the same few water sources, even in yards.

Dumpsters  Keep dumpsters covered, and remove any water inside and under dumpster.

Dunks  Dunks are donut-sized pellets that kill mosquito larvae but are non-toxic to animals. They dissolve slowly in water. Available at hardware and garden stores. (See BTI above.)

Flat roofs  Inspect weekly to remove any puddles. Fix leaks from air conditioners and pipes. Keep raingutters clear of debris and flowing freely.

Irrigation  Do not overwater. Eliminate any areas of excess standing water weekly.

Landscaping  Remove plastic sheeting under bark or rock and replace with landscape fabric that prevents weeds yet allows water through.

Lawn ornaments  Should be checked for areas that hold water, and drained or flushed weekly.

Lighting  Check garden lights and eliminate water from tops of fixtures and from inside floodlights.

Playgrounds  Drill drainage holes in tire swings and playground equipment that holds water.

Ponds  Stock with mosquito eating fish. Use mosquito dunks or BTI in ponds and larger bodies of water. Follow instructions for safe use.

Potted plants  Do not overwater plants. Empty saucers weekly or flush with garden hose. Drill small drainage holes in outdoor saucers.

Pools/Spas  Maintained pools and whirlpool spas are not a hazard since pool chemicals and filters kill any larvae. Use dunks in deserted pools and spas.

Raingutters  Keep gutters clear of debris. They can become breeding areas with standing water.

Recycling bins  Cut top and bottom from tin cans and flatten. Invert glass jars. Crush soft drink bottles and cans. Store newspapers on end, not flat. Drill drainage holes in bottom of recycling bin.

Screens  Install and maintain tight-fitting window and door screens.

Shrubbery  Trim and thin shrubs and bushy plants since they can be mosquito hiding areas.

Tool sheds  Keep shed roofs maintained and eliminate water around foundation.

Tires  Properly dispose of old tires. Drill drainage holes in tires used in retaining walls and in landscaping.

Trash cans  Keep trash cans covered. Remove buckets and containers from around trash areas.

Trees  Eliminate water from dead tree stumps and hollow areas of live trees. Fill cavities with sand and flush weekly with a hose.

Trash  Remove anything that can hold water including cans, cups, tin foil, plastic and paper since mosquito larvae can grow.

Umbrellas  Table umbrella and basketball bases often are filled with water. Cap tightly, seal with duct tape or fill with sand and cover tightly.

Weeds  Remove weeds, especially around areas close to water (by byrd at testsforge).

Wheelbarrows  Store wheelbarrows vertically or turned over to prevent water accumulation.