

QUICK GUIDE

Natural Remedies: What Works, What's a Myth

The internet loves a kitchen cure. Here is the honest version: what actually helps, what sometimes helps, and what mostly makes you feel busy.

Neem oil Works

Cold-pressed neem, 1 tsp per quart of water with a few drops of soap. Spray all leaf surfaces in the evening; repeat weekly for 3 to 4 weeks.

Why? Azadirachtin disrupts insect feeding and molting. It is slow and needs repeat contact, so one spray is never enough.

Insecticidal soap Works

Commercial soap or 1 tsp pure castile per quart. Drench pests directly; rinse leaves the next morning. Repeat every 5 to 7 days.

Why? It dissolves the waxy coating of soft-bodied insects. Only kills what it touches, so coverage matters more than strength.

Isopropyl alcohol (70%) Works

Dab mealybugs and scale with a cotton swab. For heavy cases, a 1:1 spray with water, then rinse.

Why? Alcohol dissolves the cottony wax that protects mealybugs and dries them out on contact.

Sticky traps Works

Yellow cards at soil level catch adult fungus gnats and show you how bad it is.

Why? Adults are drawn to yellow. Traps break the breeding cycle only when paired with letting the top soil dry.

Hydrogen peroxide drench Sometimes

1 part 3% peroxide to 4 parts water, poured through the soil. Helps with gnat larvae and adds oxygen to a soggy root zone.

Why? It fizzes into water and oxygen. Useful as a reset, not a routine; it also knocks back helpful microbes.

Cinnamon on cuts Sometimes

Dust fresh cuts or cuttings. Cheap and harmless.

Why? Mildly antifungal in lab tests. It will not cure an established rot; it just makes a clean wound a little safer.

Diatomaceous earth Sometimes

Food grade, dusted on dry soil surface for crawling pests.

Why? Works by scratching insect exoskeletons, but only while bone dry. One watering and it stops.

Before any remedy: isolate the plant, improve airflow, and fix the watering habit that let the problem in. Most pests are a symptom of a stressed plant.

And the ones that mostly make you feel busy. None of these will hurt to skip.

Epsom salt Mostly myth

Adds magnesium and sulfur. Indoors, almost no plant is short of either.

Why? Potting mix and fertilizer already supply magnesium. Extra salts build up in a pot and can burn roots.

Eggshells Myth indoors

Calcium, in theory. In a pot, they take years to break down.

Why? Shells need soil life and acidity to release calcium. A houseplant pot has neither in quantity.

Coffee grounds Risky

Some nitrogen, but they mat, hold water and grow mold on the soil surface.

Why? Fresh grounds are acidic and compact easily. Compost them first if you want to use them at all.

Rice water Mostly myth

Starches feed soil microbes more than the plant. Can sour in a pot.

Why? Plants take up minerals, not starch. Any benefit is indirect and easily outweighed by fungus gnats.

Milk spray Myth

Sometimes cited for powdery mildew. Smells, and feeds mold on leaves indoors.

Why? Outdoor UV is what activates any effect. Inside, you are painting leaves with protein.

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