

INTRODUCTION

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT—there’s nothing I love better than putterin’ around in my yard. Whether I’m mowing the lawn, admiring my flower-filled gardens, or harvesting home-grown veggies at the peak of perfection, I’m happy as a clam. But I have to tell you: What really gets my gray matter goin’ is figuring out how to face those little challenges that Ma Nature offers up from time to time. Rather than spend my hard-earned dough on pricey, store-bought chemicals, I like to make do with everyday items I can find right around my house. A dash of this and a splash of that, and before you know it, I’ve got myself a fabulous formula that’ll do the job. Whether it’s a matter of sending pests packing, fending off dastardly diseases, or keeping critters at bay—you name the problem, and I’ve got a terrific tonic that’s guaranteed to do the trick!

Of course, great gardening isn’t just about stopping bad things from happening. It’s also about growing the lushest lawn, the best-tasting veggies, and the brightest blooms on the block.

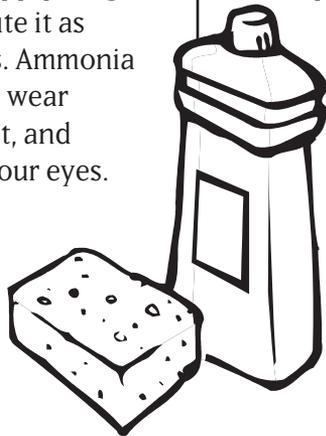


Over the years, I’ve come up with all kinds of mixers, fixers, and elixirs to get my yard and garden off to a great start at planting time, and keep them growin’ like gangbusters all season long. Now, by popular demand, I’ve gathered all my best time-tested tonics and put them in one handy-dandy place for you!

TERRIFIC TONICS: THE WHYS AND WHEREFORES

My tonics may work like magic, but there’s really nothing mysterious about them; they’re based on good, old-fashioned grow-how. You may be asking yourself, “How can common household products like baking soda and mouthwash possibly help my plants grow bigger, bloom better, and stay healthier?” Well, when you mix ‘em and use ‘em according to my directions, these excellent elixirs really do work—guaranteed! And every single one of my ingredients is in there for a darn good reason. Here’s the lowdown on the major ingredients in my timely tonics and the role that each one plays in keeping your yard in tip-top shape.

AMMONIA is a readily available source of nitrogen that'll help encourage leafy plant growth. The ammonia you buy at the grocery store is a solution of ammonium hydroxide. It's a clear liquid with a very penetrating odor. Watch out—this is very potent stuff! To avoid burning your plants, never apply it right out of the bottle; always dilute it as specified in my tonic recipes. Ammonia can burn you, too, so always wear gloves when you work with it, and don't get it anywhere near your eyes. And never, ever combine it with vinegar or bleach (or products containing either one). The resulting chemical reaction releases toxic fumes.



ANTISEPTIC MOUTHWASH does the same thing in your garden that it does in your mouth. Yep, it actually destroys those nasty germs that cause big-time trouble if you don't get after them. Don't waste your money buying fancy flavored mouthwash for your tonics, though. The plain stuff works just fine, and your plants won't mind having "medicine breath"!

BABY SHAMPOO and **DISHWASHING LIQUID** help to soften the soil and remove dust, dirt, and pollution from leaves, so important plant functions like photosynthesis can take place more easily. These simple



GRANDMA PUTT'S POINTERS

Next time you brew a pot of coffee, consider these five, not-so-common ways Grandma Putt liked to use the leftovers around her yard and garden:

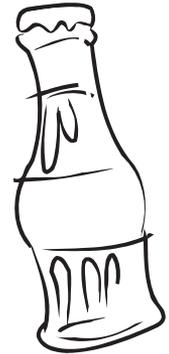
1. Control red spider mites by spraying plants with a weak solution of brewed coffee diluted with water.
2. Combine coffee grounds with dead leaves or straw to create a mulch (don't use coffee grounds alone; they tend to cake together).
3. Mix tiny seeds with dried grounds to keep the seeds from clumping, and to make them easier to handle.
4. Place coffee grounds in planting holes to boost the growth of various acid-loving plants like blueberries, gardenias, and evergreens.
5. Sprinkle grounds around your carrot patch to repel root maggots.

soaps make other sprays stick to leaves better, too. And bugs hate the taste (especially of the lemon-scented types), so they head for the hills in a hurry! Just make sure you never substitute detergent for these soaps, and, in particular, don't use antibacterial detergent, because it can damage your plants.



in the soil. It also wakes up and energizes organic activity. Foreign or domestic, stale or freshly opened—whatever you have on hand will work just fine.

COLA helps feed the good bacteria that keep your soil in great condition. Just be sure you stick with the real thing—bacteria need real sugar, not the artificial sweeteners used in diet drinks.



BEER serves as an enzyme activator to help release the nutrients that are locked

GREAT IDEA!

Garlic's good for more than spaghetti sauce!

It's also the prime ingredient in a powerful concentrate that can solve big-time bug problems. Simply mince one whole bulb of garlic and combine it with 1 cup of vegetable oil in a glass jar with a tight lid. Put the mixture in the refrigerator to steep for a day or two, then test it for "doneness." If your eyes don't water when you open the lid, add another half-bulb of minced garlic, and wait another day. Strain out the solids, and pour the oil into a fresh jar. Keep it in the fridge until you're ready to use it. Dilute as indicated in any recipe that calls for garlic oil.



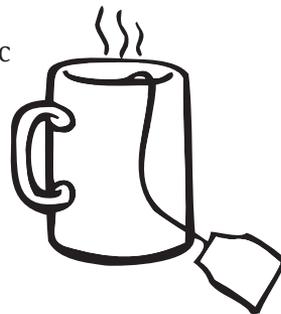
CORN SYRUP and **MOLASSES** stimulate chlorophyll production in plants, and they help to feed the good soil bacteria, too. (I'll bet you didn't know that your garden has a sweet tooth, did you?)

EPSOM SALTS are a super source of magnesium, which helps deepen flower colors and thicken petals. Magnesium also improves the root structure—and that means strong, healthy plants that are your first line of defense against pests, diseases, and even nasty weather.

GARLIC is great in the kitchen, but it's even better in your garden! Its powerful aroma sends pests scurryin', and it even acts like an antibiotic that can help sickly plants get growing on the right root again.



TEA contains tannic acid, which helps plants digest their food faster and more easily. As I always say—a well-fed plant is a happy, healthy plant!



TOBACCO is pretty nasty stuff, no matter how you look at it. It poisons bugs when they ingest it, or when they simply come into contact with it. The same thing happens to some of the germs that cause plant diseases.

URINE from any source (your choice) has a powerful—and frightening—smell that will send all kinds of critters, from deer to gophers, galloping off to find friendlier territory.



GRANDMA PUTT'S POINTERS

When garden pests were a problem for Grandma Putt, the first thing she'd do is snatch a bit of Grandpa's tobacco and brew up a batch of tobacco tea. To try it for yourself, place half a handful of chewing tobacco in an old nylon stocking. Fill a clean milk jug (or similar container) with a gallon of very hot water, then soak the tobacco-filled stocking in the hot water until the mixture turns dark brown. Label the container, then use the tobacco tea whenever one of my tonics calls for it.

WHISKEY, whether it's bourbon, Scotch, or the plain old rot-gut variety, acts as a mild disinfectant to keep bugs and thugs away. It helps provide some nutrients, too.



BE A MASTER MIXOLOGIST

No matter whether you're using a homemade remedy or a store-bought chemical—when it comes to mixing it up, safety is the name of the game. Even though most of my tonic ingredients are safe and natural, some can cause your eyes or skin to be irritated, especially if you have allergies. So mix them carefully (wearing rubber gloves is a good idea) in a well-ventilated area.

Set aside a special set of measuring cups and spoons just for the tonics, and label them clearly so you never use them for measuring other things, like food. And

you certainly wouldn't want any of these mixes to be mistaken for something that someone could eat or drink, so be sure to label each tonic clearly, and keep all products safely stored out of the reach of children and pets.

If you want to reuse containers, stick to the same or similar products. You don't want to use an herbicide container for mixing fertilizer, for example, because you just might end up spraying a little leftover herbicide on your prize-winning flowers. And that would be tragic!



ASK JERRY



Q *If my plants are looking a little sickly, can I apply more fertilizer than usual to help them out?*

A When it comes to plant food, more is not better! Always mix and apply my tonics at the recommended rate, and if you use commercial plant food, be sure you apply it exactly per the directions on the label.

SAFETY FIRST!

When applying any tonic or other material to your yard or garden, always think safety first! Just follow these simple steps:

- ◆ **Step 1:** Before using any sprayer, read all of the directions on the sprayer jar.
- ◆ **Step 2:** Before applying any material with the sprayer, “test drive” it using plain water. This will let you see exactly how it works and what it will do.
- ◆ **Step 3:** Dress sensibly. Don’t wear shorts or a bathing suit when spraying! Do wear gloves (plastic throwaways will do) and a hat if you’re spraying at or above eye level. Also, wear sun or safety glasses when spraying, and place a bandanna over your mouth, since an unexpected breeze can blow the spray back into your face.
- ◆ **Step 4:** Measure the proper amount of tonic or material, then always apply it according to the directions.
- ◆ **Step 5:** To minimize drifting of spray to non-target areas, spray only on a nice, calm day. Never spray any tonic or material on a windy day.
- ◆ **Step 6:** For maximum effectiveness—not to mention less wear and tear on

you—spray in the cool of the day (the morning or evening).

- ◆ **Step 7:** When you are finished, dispose of unused tonics or other materials properly; don’t just pour them down your drain.
- ◆ **Step 8:** Thoroughly clean your sprayer with a mild solution of soap and water after each use, then let it drain and dry before putting it away.
- ◆ **Step 9:** Always store all gardening materials out of the reach of children and pets, preferably in a locked cabinet.
- ◆ **Step 10:** Always keep materials in their original containers, and never remove the label. Also, never mix ‘n’ match different gardening materials.
- ◆ **Step 11:** Always dispose of partially filled or empty containers properly (as recommended on the label). Do not burn them!
- ◆ **Step 12:** Always read all of the directions on labels, stickers, and packages—and I mean ALL of them! Don’t take anything for granted, and don’t take any shortcuts. Read the entire label before you take the cap off, then mix only at the recommended rate or less, never more.

REMEMBER: IT’S ALWAYS BETTER TO BE SAFE, THAN SORRY!