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From Sylvia Weber, Skagit Organic Gardeners:

I just read the following article in *Birds & Bloom* magazine, as we are trying to attract beneficial insect into our gardens I thought I'd share this with you all. This is from "**Melinda's Corner**", a horticulture expert with 30 years of experience in gardening:

Keep weeds and pests at bay without harming wildlife. As wildlife gardeners, we are always trying to maintain eco-friendly gardens that are beautiful and safe. Fortunately, there are lots of new and old products that can help us manage unwelcome visitors.

A new group of pest management tools are plant protection products like JAZ spray (a product I endorse). Scientists isolated and replicated the chemicals some plants produce when dealing with stress and pests to create products we can use to "immunize" our plants. Several applications of these types of products help build the plant's natural defenses, allowing them to ward off insects and disease and better tolerate stress.

Soaps and more plant oils, like Neem, are also entering the pest-control market. In small concentrations, these products help repel, kill and control many insects and some diseases.

Iron phosphate is the active ingredient in Sluggo and other relatively new eco-friendly slug and snail controls. The iron phosphate acts as a stomach poison for the slugs but does not harm the birds, toads or pets that eat the poisoned slug.

"Spinosad" is another new type of pest control product, derived from the fermentation of a naturally occurring organism. It is classed as organic, breaks down quickly and has been shown to have minimal negative effect on beneficial insects.

Biologicals like *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) have been around for years, with several strains used to kill larvae of caterpillars, gnats, mosquitoes and potato beetles. Additional biologicals with a wider range of controls are now on the market.

Continue to invite beneficial insects into your landscape by avoiding insecticides and tolerating a bit of damage. After all, you need a food source to bring in the good guys. When purchasing beneficial insects and nematodes, realize that they often take off and infiltrate the neighborhood. Follow the release directions to try to keep some of them chomping away in your landscape.

A note from Sylvia Weber, organic gardener: "I don't use any of the above as I can tolerate a bit of damage. I don't want to risk killing the good to get to the bad bugs. These should be used only when severe damage is present."