Ticks are found in many settings – from forests to urban parks with lots of concrete and even desert areas in the west. They are very common in backyards in the eastern part of the U.S. To reduce the risk of tick bites, you need to make your yard less inviting to ticks and wildlife. Most ticks can be found within 9 feet from the edge of the woods. Keep that in mind when planning your tick management plan, especially if your yard borders woods or tall, dense gardens.

The majority of people diagnosed with Lyme, or another disease carried by ticks, get bitten by a tick in their very own yard.

The most effective tick management plan for your property uses multiple steps, listed below. The more steps you use, the more you reduce the risk.

**STEP 1: CREATE TICK-SAFE ZONES**

Review areas frequently used by your family to make them low-risk tick zones, such as walkways, mailbox areas, play areas and outdoor dining spaces. Ticks need high humidity and small animals for food to survive. Creating a drier yard with less wildlife will help reduce the risk of ticks in your yard.

- Replace grassy areas with flagstone patios, brick or gravel walkways or wooden decks for family recreation.
- Move swing set play areas away from the edge of woods. Place them in sunny spots on a wood chip foundation.
- Create a 3-foot wood chip or gravel border between lawn and woods or stone walls to restrict ticks from moving into your yard. Use Atlantic Yellow Cedar chips; the wood oil has been well studied to repel ticks, stopping them in their tracks.
- Use plants that require less water to reduce damp or wet spaces in your yard.
STEP 2: DISRUPT WILDLIFE HABITAT IN YOUR YARD

Ticks and the animals they feed on need moisture and a place to hide away from direct sunlight. The cleaner your yard is, and the more sunlight it gets, the lower the risk of ticks. Birds, in particular, carry a lot of ticks and often bring them onto your property.

- Cut grass short, trim edges around fences, buildings, sidewalks.
- Control weeds.
- Remove pools of standing water.
- Remove brush/leaves around wood piles and stone walls.
- Move wood piles away from house, stack neatly and raise off the ground.
- Seal stone walls and small openings around house.
- Treat plants with animal repellent or use plants that do not attract deer.
- Move bird feeders away from house or remove entirely from yard.
- Use plants less likely to hold moisture and shelter ticks.
- Use plants less likely to attract wildlife nests.

TIP:
Many lawn services now offer tick management programs. If you use them, make sure you evaluate the products being used to ensure effectiveness.

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STEP 3: DISRUPT TICK HABITAT IN YOUR YARD

- **Maintain a clean yard:** Rake up leaf litter, restrict the use of ground cover, cut back tree branches and shrubs to let in more sunlight.
- **Landscape with plants that help control ticks:** Deter ticks in your yard by planting fragrant anti-tick plants including: garlic, mint, rosemary, rue, wormwood, fleabane daisy, chrysanthemums, pennyroyal and Mexican marigold.
- **Remove Japanese barberry plants from your yard:** While this is a deer-resistant plant, Japanese barberry creates a perfect, humid environment for ticks and mice that are a major carrier of Lyme disease.
- **Consider chemical tick-control agents:** Permethrin, bifenthrin, cyfluthrin can be sprayed on property.

*CAUTION: Pyrethroids can be toxic to fish and permethrin, when wet, can be toxic to cats. If your property is near any bodies of water (stream, lake, etc.) seek alternatives to permethrin. Keep all pets indoors after product is sprayed on the lawn until it completely dries.*

Synthetic chemicals have a higher tick-kill rate than natural organic sprays. **Spray barriers at edge of property and any areas where plants are thick.** Consider treating your lawn three times (3x) per year (mid-May, mid-June and mid-October). Do not use any pesticides near streams or any body of water, as they may kill aquatic life or pollute the water itself. Avoid spraying flowers, herbs, vegetables, fruit trees or butterfly gardens. **Always read and follow pesticide label directions and precautions.**

- **Reduce mice populations:** Use pest control tactics to keep mice populations down and out of the house and garage where they can bring ticks in.

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• **Use Damminix® tick tubes:** Biodegradable, cardboard tubes filled with permethrin-treated cotton balls are environmentally friendly, easy to use and use a precisely targeted solution to kill deer ticks. These tubes have proven results of reducing the risk of exposure to ticks by 10-fold and are EPA approved (ticktubes.com).

• **Kill ticks with mouse bait boxes with Fipronil:** Baited boxes attract mice. Inside, an overhanging wick applies fipronil, an EPA-registered pesticide, to the mouse’s back. This is the active ingredient in many flea and tick control products (e.g., Frontline®) used on pets.

• **Consider natural organic sprays on the yard:** If you prefer not to use chemicals/pesticides, consider a natural yard spray product. These range from cedar oil to other oils like Nootkatone, garlic and more. One organic compound, with a mixture of rosemary, geraniol and peppermint (called Essentria IC3) was studied in community research with good results, but then varied in other studies. Effectiveness-testing is not common with most natural products as they don’t require EPA studies or approval. Before relying on these entirely, contact the manufacturer and learn how they tested their stated effectiveness.

Combining multiple tick management steps can help make your property safer from ticks and allow your family to enjoy the yard with increased peace of mind.

To learn more about prevention measures, visit our website or social media pages.

www.palyme.org

PA Lyme Resource Network

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PA Lyme Resource Network (www.palyme.org) is an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that provides awareness, education, support, advocacy and resources to navigate Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases in the state of Pennsylvania. PA Lyme was founded in 2012 by individuals with personal experience with these diseases and provides educational seminars, speakers, patient networking and research updates serving the general public, medical professionals, schools, private businesses and government entities. PA Lyme has the largest network of regionally based support groups in the state. The support groups hold local meetings and events to provide support, education and resources for their local communities.

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