A smart yard strives for balance. This is true for all management areas, including pests. Integrated pest management (IPM) combines multiple strategies for long-term prevention and management. Successful IPM always begins with accurate pest identification. Only then can you know the specific, available options that will affect that pest’s life cycle.

**Preferred Tactics—IPM**

- **Clean up.** Remove infected plant debris from your landscape to decrease overwintering and pest resurgence.
- **Plant pest-resistant or well-adapted plant varieties, such as native plants.**
- **Modify the way you design, irrigate, fertilize, and manage your garden to discourage pests.**
- **Alter the garden or home environment to deprive pests of the food, water, shelter, or other requirements they need to thrive.**
- **Use barriers, screens, and caulking to keep pests out of the home and garden.**
- **Squash, trap, wash off, or prune out pests.**
- **Rely on and conserve “good bugs.” They help decrease the need for insecticides that can end up in waterways if used excessively.**
- **Attract beneficial insects with plants from the aster, mint, mustard, and parsley plant families.**

**Low Impact, Low Residue Insecticides**

- **Soaps**
- **Oils**
- **Microbials such as Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt)**

Beneficial insects and other organisms that kill pests are called natural enemies. In any pest management program, it is important to conserve these natural enemies by targeting pests and avoiding broad spectrum applications of pesticides. Encourage beneficial insects with plants that provide them food and shelter. Learn to identify beneficial insects, both in their adult and immature (larval) stages.

**Turning to Pesticides**

Use pesticides only if nonchemical controls are ineffective, and pests are reaching intolerable levels. If pesticides are necessary, use them in combination with nonchemical methods.

Always read the pesticide label before use. Use the least toxic, most effective material while considering potential effects on the surrounding environment.
A balanced garden contains both “good bugs,” or beneficial insects, and a few pest insects.

**Common Good Bugs in Alabama Gardens**

- **Lady beetles**
  Adults and larvae eat aphids.

- **Lacewings**
  Larvae feed on many insect pests; you’ll often see adults around lights.

- **Syrphid flies**
  Larvae eat aphids, and adults pollinate flowers.

- **Parasitic mini-wasps**
  The female lays eggs on insects such as aphids or caterpillars; their hatching larvae consume the pest and kill it.

- **Spiders**
  All spiders feed on insects or other arthropods and are beneficial in the garden.

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**Smart choices protect other resources, including rivers and lakes!**