

Plant Your Defenses

Prevent Zika during the peak mosquito season.

Greenhouse humidity, standing water in flower pots, rising summer temperatures. These nursery conditions are ideal not only for your plants, but for disease-carrying mosquitoes during their peak season. Whether working in an outdoor nursery or a greenhouse, RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment)® wants you to be prepared to prevent mosquito bites.

Aedes aegypti mosquitoes are one of two types of mosquitoes that transmit the [Zika virus](#), and carry other diseases, such as West Nile virus and chikungunya that pose a threat to you and your co-workers if bitten. *Aedes* are not your typical mosquito. While we often think of mosquitoes biting at dawn and dusk, *Aedes* bite all day, meaning they have the potential to bite during daytime working hours. While you're hard at work, eliminate standing water that provides an ideal breeding ground for *Aedes* mosquitos.

While reported cases of Zika in the United States have been travel related, it is important to take precautions to prevent the spread of the disease. Zika virus has the potential to [spread](#) anywhere the *Aedes* mosquito is present, mainly in the southern portion of the United States, but as far reaching as California to the West and New Hampshire to the East. An easy first step to preventing mosquito bites is by applying an EPA-approved insect repellent during these summer months, along with a separate application of sunscreen to protect yourself when outdoors.

These tips from RISE can help you take the necessary steps to prevent Zika this summer every time you head outdoors to take care of your plants:

- **Apply mosquito-specific defenses.** When heading outdoors, be sure to apply EPA-approved insect repellent on exposed skin and reapply as needed, according to label directions. Most CDC recommended insect repellents should be reapplied every four hours to properly repel mosquitoes. This is even more important for pregnant women and men or women planning to start a family, due to the Zika virus' connection to birth defects.
- **Put up personal barriers.** *Aedes* mosquitoes bite all day, so it is important to cover up with light-colored long sleeves and pants. Consider EPA-approved insect repellent-treated clothing when working outdoors or in the greenhouse.
- **Use sunscreen and repellent separately.** Buy sunscreen and insect repellent separately since they should be reapplied in different intervals of time. The CDC recommends applying sunscreen first, and then EPA-approved insect repellent according to label directions, since DEET-containing repellents can decrease the SPF in sunscreen when the products are used together.
- **Eliminate standing water.** *Aedes* mosquitoes can breed in water trapped in containers as small as a bottle cap. Do a quick survey of your greenhouse and surrounding areas and remove any standing water such as rainwater or spillover that can collect in buckets or plant pots.

For more information, visit debugthemyths.com/zika.