THE CARLISLE  SOLUTION

Mosquitoes don’t like a few familiar herbs that you can use to stay bite-free this season. Grow pots on our patio or keep the crushed leaves of these six plants in a small container at intervals on your patio to repel mosquitoes. Except for marigold and wormwood, which can cause contact dermatitis, you can rub the crushed leaves on your skin for added protection.

**• Marigold (Tagetes spp.).** This sun-loving annual also repels aphids and is an excellent companion plant for your vegetable garden. Marigolds are an easy-to-care-for border plant and the simplicity of collecting seeds for next year’s planting makes this plant an affordable addition. **Note: Do not rub on skin.

• Rosemary (Rosmarinus officinalis).** The oil of this shrub is heavenly to most humans, but disgusting to mosquitoes. It’s an attractive plant for container or herb gardens that requires little water and also is delicious when used for cooking meat, soups and egg dishes.

**• Lemongrass (Cymbopogon citratus).** This plant has a lemony scent that mosquitoes hate. With a little patience, it can be grown from stalks sold in the market. It prefers full sun and good drainage. Keep in mind that this tropical plant won’t tolerate freezing temperatures.

**• Wormwood (Artemisia absinthium).** This perennial has silvery foliage and can be grown in full sun in most zones. Makes a unique border plant and the pungent odor keeps mosquitoes at bay. **Note: Do not rub on skin.**
**• Mint (Mentha spp.).** Many mints’ oils are unpleasant to mosquitoes, so keep a pot or two of these hardy and aromatic plants around. Since they spread easily, mints are best cultivated in containers.

**• Lemon thyme (Thymus x citriodorus).** A perennial herb whose fragrant foliage contains one or more phytochemicals that alone or in combination can repel mosquitoes. It is more effective if you rub it onto your skin.

**• Lemon balm (Melissa officianalis).** For a quick mosquito repellent, simply crush a handful of lemon balm leaves in your hand and rub them on your exposed skin. Grow the plants near your backdoor or in your garden, where the leaves will be handy when you need them. Some forms of lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*) are nearly 38 percent citronellal. Plus, this mellow herb has beneficial calming and even soporific effects. A variety called ‘Quedlinburger Niederliegende’ with this higher content of essential oil is available from [Johnny’s Selected Seeds](http://www.johnnyseeds.com/) and [Richters](http://www.richters.com/).

**• Catnip (Nepeta cataria).** A perennial for some gardeners and an annual for others, catnip has been found to be 10 times more effective than DEET at keeping mosquitoes away. Cats will crush this plant if it is in a garden bed and it can become invasive, but keeping a couple of plants in hanging containers helps avoid both problems.