Natural Pesticides No. TNP4

Pyrethrum, Chrysanthemum cinerariaefolium

The white flowerheads of the pyrethrum plant possess insecticidal properties. Pyrethrum is most productive at altitudes of above 1600 meters and ideally in semi-arid conditions where winters are cool. On richer soils the insecticidal properties are reduced.

Note: Care should be taken when handling pyrethrum. Repeated contact can cause rashes and irritations. Inhaling pyrethrum dust can cause sickness.

Preparations

Pyrethrum should be picked on a warm day when the flowers are fully open. Then pile up into small heaps in the sun to warm through. Spread out to dry on thick mats in a shady area. If they are to be stored, they need to be kept in an air-tight container in the dark. Light significantly reduces the effectiveness of the flowers. Pyrethrum is a contact poison, it repels pests and acts as an antifeedant.

• Pyrethrum powder

Grind flowers to a dust. The finer the dust, the more effective the powder is. Mix with a carrier like talc or lime (pyrethrum can also be used pure).

How to use: Sprinkle over infested plants. Pyrethrum is useful against aphids, coffee bugs, Colorado beetles, flea beetles, grasshoppers, caterpillars, thrips and moths.

• Pyrethrum liquid

Mix 1 to 1.5kg pyrethrum flowers with 3kg liquid soap and 100 litres water. Strain through a sieve or cloth and use immediately as a spray. The soap increases the effect of the pyrethrum four times.

How to use: Use the preparation quickly as a spray against most insects including aphids, coffee bugs, Colorado beetles, flea beetles, grasshoppers, caterpillars, thrips and moths.

Produced by the Tropical Advisory Service, June 2000