

Sleeping with a mosquito

By Nate Smelle

On the edge of summer in North Hastings, we usually expect a series of returns to arrive with the season and change our routines. Right on schedule, the annual influx of blood-suckers showed up over the long weekend to make their presence known.

With the sun shining and a long list of work outdoors to be done, there was no avoiding the seasonal bloodletting that was due. Before stepping outside Sunday morning to begin the day of chores ahead, it appeared by the swarm of mosquitoes literally knocking on the door that my donation of plasma was highly anticipated.

As every resident of North Hastings knows, it doesn't take long to form a collection of homegrown remedies to help ease the the pain and suffering caused by these tiny, yet ferocious creatures. From spraying vinegar on bites to numb the itch, to planting beebalm or marigolds to keep the thirsty insects at bay; there are more than enough recipes for homemade repellents and medicines to fill a newspaper. In my experience, however, the most effective way to limit the necessary suffering caused by these winged-armies of mosquitoes and blackflies invading our airspace is the same remedy used to repel vampires ? garlic.

Since my time spent at the family cottage near Fenelon Falls as a child, I can recall my grandparents selling me on the value of this potent and precious plant. While there are a multitude of ways to prepare and use garlic as an eco-friendly bug spray, I have always found it most powerful when it is ingested.

For this reason, during the past month and a half I have been eating as much garlic as humanly possible. A big fan of its flavour, an extra clove or two of garlic can redefine the taste of any dish on the menu. A highly nutritious plant, garlic is known to: boost the functioning of the immune system; help fight a variety of illnesses, including the common cold; reduce blood pressure; improve cholesterol levels; contain antioxidants that are said to help prevent Alzheimer's disease and dementia; improve bone health; and, detoxify the body. Complimenting its medicinal abilities, is the fact it can be grown relatively easily here in North Hastings.

Walking out my front door and into the shape-shifting clouds of insects on Sunday, I watched as the overwhelming majority of these creatures of the night caught a whiff of my exposed limbs, and decided to keep searching for another donor. Of course not everyone of the insects was deterred by my preemptive dosing of preventative medicine.

Despite my long-term strategy when it comes to biting insect control, I have made it part of my routine over the years to allow the first brave mosquito of the season to have its fill. Watching as this lucky diner began to feed, I laughed as I thought of how much energy and resources we humans invest in the avoidance of this timeless interaction. I guess His Holiness the Dalai Lama was correct when he said, ?If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito.?