

THOSE PESKY MEALY BUGS

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“Do not wait for mealy bugs to find your plants. Take PREVENTIVE measures on a regular basis.”

That is a quote from *Isabelle McDermid* in her article “Tips on Growing Stapeloids” in *The Amateurs' Digest* (Col. 2, No. 3) the Canadian Cactus and Succulent Publication by *Marina Welham*.

Isabelle sprays her Stapeloids at least once a month with a mixture of equal parts rubbing alcohol and sudsy ammonia. She says it doesn't hurt the plants and it discourages the mealybugs. She also drenches the soil in the pots with a good 'systemic' dissolved in water. She finds this prevents root mealybugs from taking up residence in the potting soil. I think this is good advice for all our cacti and succulents. Be careful with the systemic. Don't get the solution on your skin.

Reading this article and others in the same issue on mealy bugs reminded me of how I try to cope with this universal problem. I thought I'd share some of my thoughts with you on the subject.

Here is the rubbing alcohol mix I prepare in a one-gallon jug (I've never tried sudsy ammonia):

1. **4 pints of 70% (by volume) Isopropyl Rubbing Alcohol.**
2. **Ivory dishwashing liquid. I'm not very exact on the amount—around 8 to 12 or so drops.**
3. **Tabasco Pepper Sauce. Same drops as above.**
4. **Water from the faucet. Fill the rest of jug with water.**

The Ivory dishwashing liquid is the sticking agent that makes the mix stick to the little mealy bodies—which hopefully makes them sicker than the devil. I read somewhere many years ago that the Tabasco sauce helps to discourage spider mites. I've used this mix for years and I've never seen any bad effect on any of my plants. Although I don't have any scientific data on the effect of this mix on mealybugs and spider mites, I believe I've kept the population down some by my constant use of it. I have a number of squirt bottles full of the mix strategically placed near my plants for immediate use when I need it.