

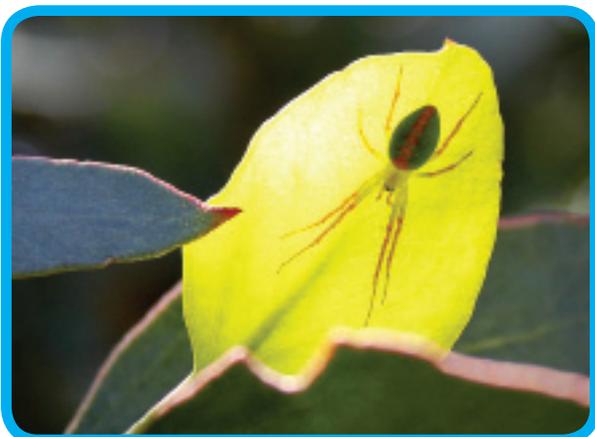
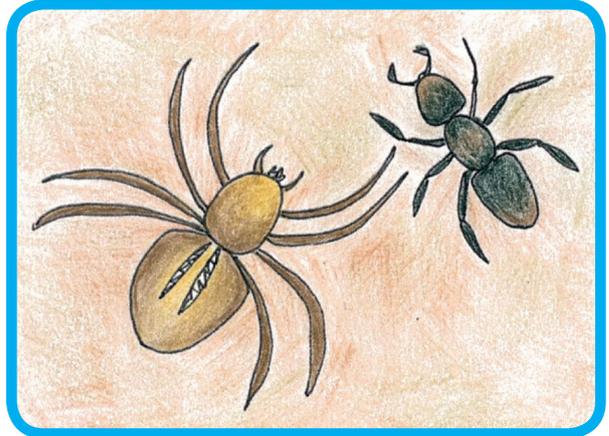
How to ... control unwanted house pests

Flies in the kitchen are enough to send even the most peaceful of chefs completely crazy. So, how to avoid them and keep the food free from fly spray? Sunny windows are flies' most common points of entry into your home, so close windows before the sun hits them. Use sticky flypaper to catch unwelcome visitors. You can make your own with honey and yellow paper.

Mice and rats. Surely they belong outside, in a land far, far away. So why are they in your kitchen? Because there's lots of tasty stuff to eat. How to avoid them? Keep storage areas clean and tidy and seal holes in walls. The RSPCA advises that old-fashioned snap traps are a humane way to kill mice or rats because death is likely to be instant; just make sure the trap is placed so it will not be triggered by your finger, a child or pet. The RSPCA also endorses live traps, but you must be sure these traps are monitored regularly to prevent the animal from starving to death before it can be released outside.

Moths. A nibbled moth hole in a brand new jumper can be devastating (although not worthy of chucking the jumper – a little mending usually saves the day). Avoid moths by keeping vulnerable clothes clean, dry and well aired. Seal clothes tightly in boxes or bags with moth-repellent sachets - small cotton bags filled with cedar shavings, dried lavender or equal parts of dried rosemary and mint. Or try dried orange peel scattered through your clothes. Rid clothes of moth eggs by hanging them in the sun for several hours or running them through the clothes drier. To trap moths, mix 1 part molasses with 2 parts vinegar and place in a yellow container. Clean trap regularly. Avoid conventional mothballs and flakes made of toxic chemicals.

Mosquitoes. We all hate mozzies. So what to do about them? A preventative measure if you have a rainwater tank is to pour 1/2 cup paraffin oil into the tank. There are a number of herbal repellents on the market containing ingredients such as citronella, lavender and tea tree oil to keep mosquitoes. Or you can simply rub yourself with crushed leaves of basil, mint, chamomile or tansy. Mmmm, tasty.



Silverfish. Prevent dampness that encourages silverfish. Make traps by placing 1 part molasses to two parts vinegar in a dish. Silverfish can be repelled by treating skirting boards, table legs and cracks in cupboards with a mixture of borax and sugar (or honey).

Spiders. Genuine phobias and seriously dangerous ones aside, it's best to take a deep breath and leave spiders alone because they help to control other pests.

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Cockroaches. Gross. Prevention is the best medicine.

Keep all surfaces clean with soapy water and a dash of eucalyptus, pine or cedar oil. Mind you, prevention isn't much help if you've already got them. Try these tips:

* Combine 1 part borax, 2 parts flour and 1/2 part icing sugar, then add water and mix into a dough. Place in areas where cockroaches frequent, but out of reach of pets and children.

* A small container of water with a teaspoon of oil can attract cockroaches. They'll climb in and be unable to get out and will drown (eventually)

* A variation on the above - take a small jar and spread oil around the inside of it, place bait in the jar such as a small piece of sweet fruit or a bit of dad's beer; set it upright in roach territory - again, they'll be able to get in, but not out.

* Sprinkle borax powder where roaches are active. It will collect on their bodies, be licked off and then kill them. Again, keep out of reach of pets and children.



Ants are amazing little creatures: clever, complex, and social. But that doesn't mean you want them enacting their incredible lives in your kitchen. Prevention is the best way to go. Keep your building clean and tightly sealed. You can also repel ants with any of the following: cinnamon, cayenne pepper, black pepper, vinegar, chalk, talcum powder and bay leaves.

When they've already broken into your house try this following recipe:

* Mix one teaspoon boric acid or borax with a jar of jelly or 2 cups of sugar water. Place the jelly or tiny cotton balls dipped in the sugar-water mixture near the ant problem, but do not block the ant trail. Place one to three pieces of bait every 25 feet. The ants will/should carry the boric acids back to their colony and that will be that. If you can't stomach the thought of decimating an entire ant colony you may just have to grin and bear it: we've found that putting little tempting treats outside (blobs of honey, crumbs) at least keeps them out of the kitchen for a while. Generally speaking the ants will have their time in your kitchen then move on.



Ticks and fleas are as big a problem for you as they are for your pets. There is no need to resort to chemical sprays. If your pets are infested, wash them well with soap and warm water, dry thoroughly and use the following herbal rinse: Add 1/2 cup fresh or dried rosemary to 1 litre boiling water. Steep 20 minutes, strain and cool. Spray or sponge evenly onto pet and allow to air dry. Do not towel down as this will remove the residue. Or use a commercial shampoo containing 'penny royal' regularly.

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