

Bugs

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be emptied and refilled daily and sinks and bathtubs should be kept free of standing water.

■ Clogging is not the only pitfall of having gutters on your home. Gutters that aren't cleaned out can foster all sorts of insect activity since most insects thrive in wet eco-debris such as leaves, mud and twigs.

■ Perhaps the most important thing that you can do to prevent infestations is to clean your home regularly. Insects are attracted to food crumbs, sugar, salt and drink that might be left on your counter or tables. Food for humans and pets should be kept in sealed containers. Fruit shouldn't be left out on counters. Take out trash regularly, especially from the kitchen.

SUGAR AND SPICE

If you have thoroughly cleaned your home and you still find bugs, you may find relief by using some common things found in many home pantries.

■ Spices such as cinnamon, red chile powder and paprika, as well as apple cider vinegar, have been known to stop ants in their tracks. Simply sprinkle a line near your doors, and the ants will not cross.

■ Garlic is a deterrent for cockroaches and ants. Cockroach remedies should be placed on top of, not inside, cabinets. (It's a lesser known fact that roaches like high places.)

■ Placing cucumbers by ants' point of entry into your home will deter most species. Ants have a natural aversion to cucumbers, especially the bitter ones.

■ Basil is a good fruit fly repellent. Keeping a basil plant in your kitchen will keep the flies away.

■ Citrus is a good ant, spider and flea repellent. For ants, squeeze lemon or lime juice across the ants' path to reroute them. Spiders can be kept out through much the same method.

Simply squeeze lemon juice on your window or door seals. Fleas can be kept at bay by treating your dog or cat with an oil made by pouring boiling water over a lemon. When the potion has cooled off, scrub down your dog or cat's hair with the oil to keep fleas away. Be sure to check

with your vet to make sure this treatment is safe for your pet.

■ Coffee grounds also can keep ants and spiders out of your home.

OILS ARE ESSENTIAL

Essential oils made from trees and plants are a somewhat more expensive method of keeping out insects.

But before using essential oils it's important to check with your doctor if you are pregnant, breast-feeding or have an infant.

Likewise, if you have pets, check with your vet.

Simply use the essential oil of your choice diluted with water. Generally, use a half-ounce to an ounce of essential oil with 16 ounces of water in a spray bottle. The best thing about essential oils is that they are safe for children without allergies and can replace store-bought bug repellents that contain DEET.

■ Lemon eucalyptus oil is recommended as an insecticide. It can repel a majority of insects.

Other oils recommended for spiders, ants, fleas and mosquitoes are rosemary, citronella, lavender, pennyroyal and tea tree.

■ Cedar chips placed in a small satchel and spritzed with cedar oil will deter most moths. Simply place the tiny bag on a closet shelf. Lavender and rosemary are also indicated for keeping moths at bay. Cedar oil is also a known mosquito repellent.

■ Mint oils are known to keep ants and spiders out. Peppermint



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Coming next week:

The widely advertised DirectBuy buying club offers moneysaving benefits on products for the home, but it's not for everyone.

is the most commonly used oil for this. It can be quite potent, however. If your allergies can't take it, try diluting it further or using spearmint essential oil.

■ Citronella, geranium and juniper oils prevent houseflies, easily the most common and bothersome pest during the summer.

■ Eucalyptus oil is suggested to eradicate dust mites, which are a common cause of allergies and asthma in children and adults. Eucalyptus has the added effect of clearing out your sinuses. Be sure to keep this and all other oils away from your eyes, especially if you have allergies, because irritation is common.

NEW USE FOR TOBACCO AND SOAP

Remarkably, even items like tobacco and soap can be used to cut down on infestations. Pipe tobacco juice, diluted with half a cup of lemon dish soap, can be sprayed around the house as a spider deterrent. Just be careful not to spray anything that might stain.

Soap and water is a much less messy alternative. This mixture can serve as an immediate fix for any problem bugs. Simply fill a spray bottle with soapy water and shoot any bug you see. The soap will dry out bugs from cockroaches to ants.

Regardless of what bug you find invading your home, there is usually an easy remedy that will not only save you money but also offer an alternative to chemical repellents.