

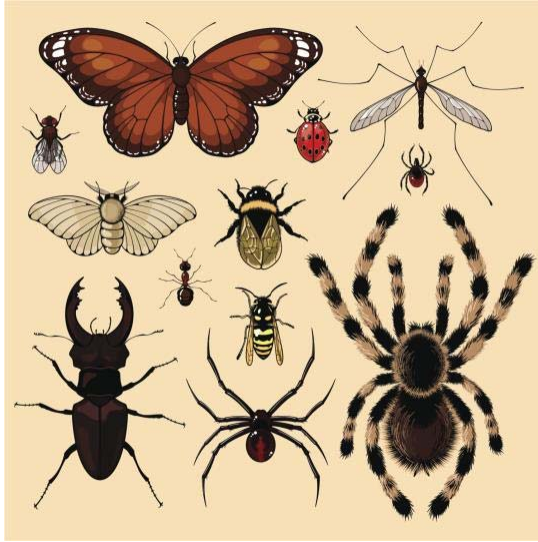
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YAHOO! MAKERS

## All-Natural Ways to Banish Ants, Mosquitoes, and Spiders. Ewwwww... Spiders

Lizbeth Scordo | May 15, 2015



(Bugs! Lots of bugs. Credit: Thinkstock)

Spring has sprung and that means it's time to fling open the windows and doors and enjoy some of that fresh air that's getting warmer by the day. But along with that lovely weather comes a few other things you might not want to welcome in: pests. From ants in the kitchen to spiders in the bathroom to mosquitoes on the porch, the battle of the bugs is about to begin.

As much as we want to keep those bugs at bay, the idea of using toxic chemicals isn't all that appealing. So can you still get the job done the all-natural way? You bet. Here, several green living experts share their DIY tricks for keeping creepy crawlers out of your abode all summer long.



(Spiders hate peppermint. Who knew? Credit: Thinkstock)

**Spiders:** Think of peppermint essential oil as an *unwelcome* mat for

arthropods. "It's as easy as placing a couple drops on a cotton ball in strategic areas around the home and refresh the cotton balls as needed," says Tara Wagner, green living educator and founder of sustainable living blog Sustainable Baby Steps.

Another tip: Add the oil to your homemade all-purpose cleaner. "It helps to kill germs with its antibacterial and antiseptic properties and smells yummy while using the oil throughout the home regularly enough to make a difference with spiders and many varieties of other bugs, too."

**Fruit Flies:** Sarah Umm Yusuf, a natural-living blogger at Nature's Nurture reveals her secret for getting rid of these pesky pests in the kitchen: Fill a small jar with a generous splash of apple cider vinegar and a few drops of dish soap, plus a piece of overripe fruit (like berries or bananas). Cover the jar with some plastic wrap, and secure it tightly with a rubber band. Poke several small holes in the plastic wrap, then set the jar in an area where you usually see the flies – like near the compost, the fruit basket, or the trash. "The flies will be attracted to the scent of the vinegar and ripe fruit and enter the jar through the tiny holes in the top. The dish soap breaks the surface tension of the liquid so the flies can't just sit on top of it and will actually fall in," she explains. "And for those that happen to make it out of the water, they're unable to fly back out of the tiny holes in the jar, so they'll eventually fall into the liquid as well. Sounds evil, I know, but it's very effective!"

**Termites:** Here's the catch-22: Ants are a natural termite predator, so they key is not getting rid of *all* of the ants on your property. "If you use bug spray you may be creating a bigger problem than you're solving," says Wagner. "Instead, work to keep ants under control and out of the kitchen." That way the ants can still survive outside your home and hopefully help you keep termites out of wood piles."



(Ants feel the same way about cinnamon as spiders do about peppermint. Credit: Thinkstock)

**Ants:** The ants of the world have Umm Yusuf on their side too. "I don't like to kill them, so I try to deter them instead. To do that, we use cinnamon, either ground or essential oil," she says. "They really don't like the smell of it, so either sprinkle ground cinnamon or rub a little cinnamon essential oil near the openings where they come into the house, and they won't cross over it."

But it's Carpenter ants (the largest variety in the United States) that are the bigger problem since they can do serious damage to your home. "What many people don't realize, however, is that unlike termites, ants don't eat wood, but live in and further damage wood softened by moisture," explains Inger Wilkerson, founder of the green life blog Art of Natural Living. "If you find a nest in your home, you may be able to simply repair the area since the ants may disappear as a result of being disturbed. Repairing the damaged wood and eliminating any source of moisture will reduce the chance that they will return."

**Mosquitoes:** The problem here is less with the insects finding their way to your home and more about feasting on you and your family while you're trying to enjoy dinner in the backyard. Umm Yusuf makes her own all-natural bug spray with equal parts distilled water and witch hazel. "Then I add about 30 drops of essential oils - any combination of citronella, lavender, rosemary, cinnamon, or eucalyptus," she says. "You just have to apply it more often." A small price to pay to not have the nasty smell of bug spray lingering all night long ...

**And While You're at It:** Our experts agree that deterring pests in the first place is the key, that way you don't end up with any new housemates to evict in the first place. The trick? Being diligent about keeping things clean: That means wiping up any food spills, sweeping up crumbs, and keeping garbage bags sealed. A great investment, according to Wilkerson, is a batch of glass jars. "Many different pests, including cockroaches ants, and meal worms, would like nothing better than to invade your flour, sugar, or raisins or to eat up the spills that fall off a partially used bag," she explains. "Glass gallon jars with good lids are great for storing pantry staples and removing the temptation for insects to invade your home."

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