

Alternatives to pesticides : bio-controls for household pests

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# Alternatives to pesticides



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## Bio-controls for household pests

Household insecticides are so commonly used that we forget they may be dangerous, such as the pesticides used in agriculture and forestry. In addition, the chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) contained in some aerosol sprays destroy the ozone layer in the upper atmosphere. Here are some ecological suggestions to get rid of household pests. The best idea is probably to use a combination of the suggested methods to prevent insects from adapting to any of them.



Whitefly



Bee



Criquet



Ant

### HOUSEHOLD INSECTS

Some people can't stand spiders, but they help keep many other household pests under control. You may want to destroy the cobwebs, but you shouldn't kill spiders because they are very useful.

**Fruit flies** are attracted to light. Pull the shades down on all windows, leaving a small crack at the bottom of one window to admit light. Fruit flies will gather there and be easy to kill.

#### Crickets

Mix molasses and vanilla extract or lemon juice with water to attract and drown crickets. Plug any holes around the house where they are getting in.

#### Ants

Aphids on outdoor plants are an attractive food source for ants. Eliminate aphids by spraying with soapy water. To prevent ants from getting into trees, wrap strips of cloth smeared with roofing tar around the trunks. Pour boiling water, soapy water, salted water,

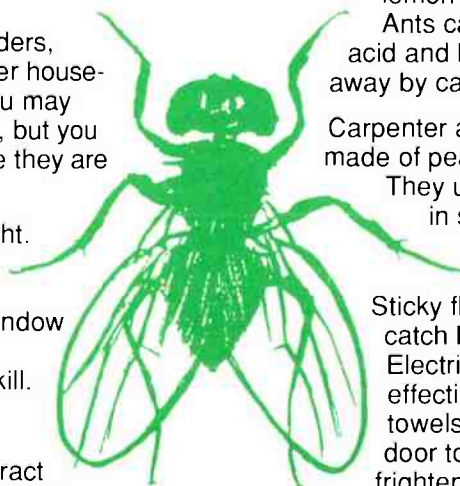
or 350 mL water mixed with 30 mL boric acid over the anthill. Sprinkle the nest with red pepper (not Cayenne pepper), eggshells, bonemeal, talcum powder, wood ash, sulphur, blood meal, coffee grounds or diatomaceous earth. Tomato leaves or walnut leaves left on top of the nest will also repel ants.

To discourage **ants** from coming inside, plant pansies or herbs (mint, marjoram, lavender, fennel) around the house. Find their point of entry into the house, squeeze the juice of a lemon and leave the rind there.

Ants can be lured to a bait of boric acid and honey. They'll be driven away by camphor or sage in closets.

Carpenter ants can be killed by a bait made of peanut butter and boric acid.

They usually establish their colony in soft or rotting wood.



#### Houseflies

Sticky flypaper is still a good way to catch houseflies and it is not toxic. Electric insect traps are also effective. Attaching white paper towels to the middle of a screen door to resemble a butterfly may frighten flies away. A stream of

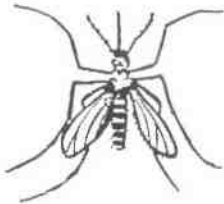
cold air across a doorway, like the one created by an air conditioner, keeps flies out of the house. Hang fresh hazel leaves, tomato leaves or marigold near the doorway, or plant them if you prefer.

#### Mosquitoes

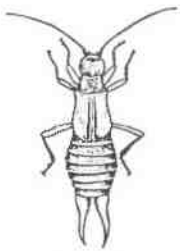
It's hard to control mosquitoes, which breed in stagnant water in damp areas. Drain areas around the house to reduce the mosquito population. Grow savory and castor-oil plant



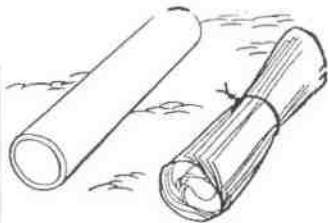
Housefly



Mosquito



Earwig



Rolled-up newspaper filled with peanut butter.

near the doorway to keep mosquitoes away. Add anise oil to your rinse water when washing clothes; you won't need insect repellent for a while.

Don't wear perfume or wash your hair with scented shampoo when you're going to spend the day outside where there are a lot of mosquitoes. Citronella or camphor oil rubbed on the skin keeps them from biting. Try to take some along you if you don't mind the smell.

### Earwigs

Earwigs hide in dark, damp places, but they are easy to trap and destroy. Place short lengths of garden hose or **rolled-up newspaper** on the edges of your property. Fill them with peanut butter, fish oil or vegetable oil; the insects will crawl inside. An **upside-down flower pot** stuffed with newspaper or peat moss and placed in a tree will also trap them, as will a small can filled with bacon fat or hamburger fat. The next morning, destroy the captured earwigs by dumping them into a bucket of hot water or water. If you discover a number of earwigs together, sprinkle them with diatomaceous earth or soap.

### SLUGS AND SNAILS

Slugs and snails love acid soil and plantain. Monitor the pH of the soil and pick weeds by hand. Lime, wood ash, salt and small pieces of hair irritate them, making them secrete mucus until they die. For the same reason, they won't go over a rope. Plant delphinium, foxglove, primrose or garlic to repel them. Mulches of oak leaf or pine needles will also drive them away.

They are attracted to lettuce or cabbage leaves or upside-down grapefruit halves. Collect the bait at night while they are still eating and kill them with salt water or 40 g alum mixed with 10 L boiling water. Another way is simply to burn the bait.

You may place small containers in the ground, protected from the rain, and fill them with beer or honey. The pests will crawl into the containers and drown. Repeat regularly.

A cat also keeps slugs and snails away.

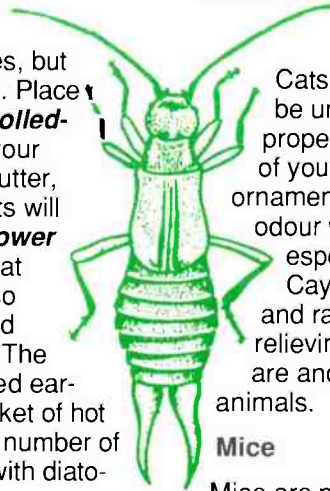
### ANIMAL PESTS

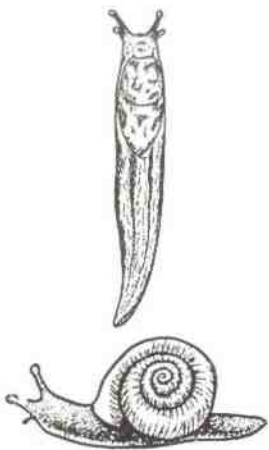
Cats and dogs, like other animals, can be undesirable when they damage your property. To keep cute little kittens out of your flower beds, plant Fritillaria bulbs, ornamental garlic or even onions. The odour will deter almost any animal, especially rodents. Red, black and Cayenne pepper will keep raccoons and rabbits away, and prevent dogs from relieving themselves under trees. Fences are another good way to keep out curious animals.

### Mice

Mice are particularly nasty because they feed eagerly on tender shoots the under snow, unseen. Young trees can be protected by wrapping their trunks with spiral casing or sticking lengths of drainpipe firmly into the ground. You may also wrap trunks with strips of cloth covered with a mixture of one part tar and three parts melted suet.

A number of plants repel mice and prevent them from nesting at the foot of trees: amaryllis, mint, lavender, daffodils, narcissus, squill, hyacinth, catnip or spurge. A mulch of





Slug and Snail



Netting draped over plants



Scarecrow

thuja bark, savory or oak leaves will keep mice away. Camphor and mothballs also deter them. If you use mouse-traps, mask your odour with anise oil.

### Moles

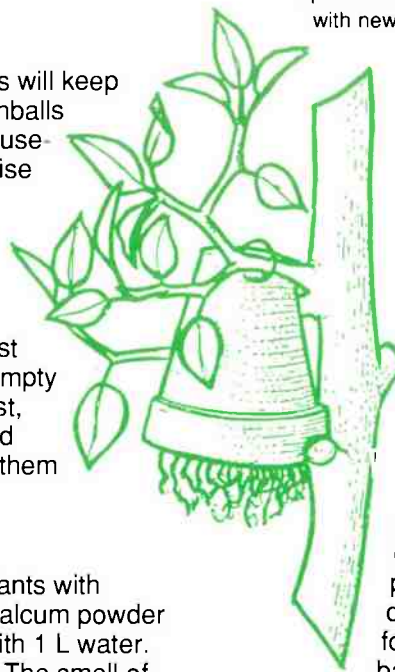
Moles are repelled by hyacinths and castor-oil plants. Garlic cloves placed in their nest will chase them out. Stick an empty bottle in the entrance to the nest, with the neck outside. The wind whistling in the bottle will drive them away.

### Rabbits

To keep rabbits away, spray plants with Cayenne pepper, blood meal, talcum powder or 30 mL Epsom salts mixed with 1 L water. Paint tree trunks with manure. The smell of mothballs or dog hair scattered near plants also repels rabbits.

### Birds

Birds are beneficial because they eat a lot of insect pests, but sometimes they snack on berries and seedlings. Netting draped over



Upside-down flower pot stuffed with news-paper.

plants or trees is still the best solution. Try putting up a scarecrow, scattering sliced onion, or hanging bright rags or milk cartons from trees. These methods work for a while, but the birds eventually realize that they aren't dangerous.

### Deer

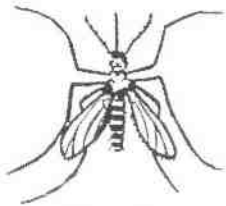
A high fence around the garden is the best protection against deer, but it's expensive. Try growing castor-oil plants or foxglove, or scattering dog or human hair near the plants. Paint tree trunks with diluted human urine or spray foliage with 15 to 30 mL Tabasco sauce in 4 L water. Small bars of Ivory soap hanging from trees repel deer for a while.

Most of these ideas are easy to apply, non-toxic and effective against household pests. Many of the plants mentioned also enhance the value of your house.

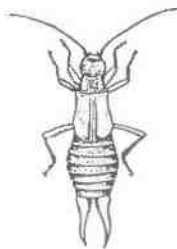




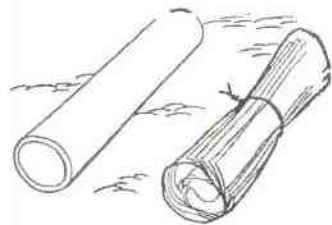
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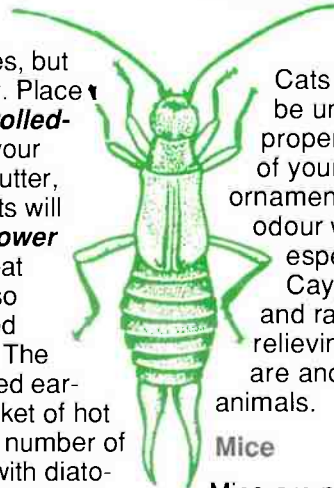
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### SUGGESTED READING

Agriculture Canada. 1985. Insect Control in the Home. Publication 1736/E. Ottawa. 17 p.

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