

8 Best Ways to Bug-Proof Your House

By Michael Pomranz

What you can do to the outside — and inside — of your home to keep ants, roaches, and other little buggers at bay.



Spring is finally here (Mother Nature willing)! The warm weather is a wonderful opportunity to shake off that cabin fever and head outside. But while you can't wait to get out, pests are trying to get in. The Entomological Society of America says there are nearly 10 quintillion insects on Earth. That's more than a billion bugs per person in the world! Though they're not all trying to grab a snack from your kitchen, many emerge from winter hiding once temperatures rise and begin looking for food and water.

How do you keep the buggers at bay? Missy Henriksen, of the National Pest Management Association, advises homeowners to "incorporate pest-proofing as part of their spring cleaning and yard clean up routines."

Here are eight simple steps how...



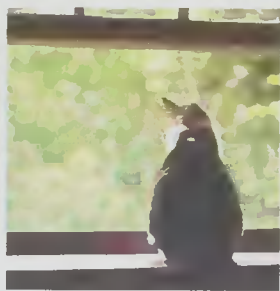
1. Keep your eyes peeled

Sure, insects can appear to have otherworldly abilities—mosquitos can fly, cockroaches can supposedly survive the apocalypse—but they can't materialize out of nowhere. Your best defense: Look for warning signs and problem areas to stop them from invading your space.

For instance, ants send out "scouts" to scope the ant-friendliness of your home, so even an ant or two indoors can mean it's time to get pest-proofing before those scouts invite over their friends.

Check outside and learn where bugs hang out. Firewood can be home to ants and termites so store wood at least 20 feet from your house. And standing water is a breeding ground for mosquitos, says Boyd Huneycutt, co-founder of pest control company Mosquito Squad. "Yards with bird baths, play sets with tire swings, tree houses, fire pits and catch basins to recycle water should all be checked regularly and water tipped," he suggests. Even your land

scaping can be problematic: Try keeping branches and shrubs well groomed away from your walls, so bugs don't make the natural transition from their home to yours.



2. Secure the outside to keep pests from getting in

Unless your house came equipped with a bug breeding room, all insects invaders were once living outside. Your job is to keep them there. "The most important means to eradicate a pest problem is to work from the outside to the inside," says Peter Stieglmayer of RK Environmental Services.

Anything that connects your home to the great outdoors can be a trouble spot: Windows, vents, pipes, chimneys, and roof shingles are just some of the spots bugs will sneak through. Repair anything that creates a possible entrance like torn window screens or loose weather-stripping. If you find open spaces near pipes or vents, use caulk to fill small cracks or steel wool for larger gaps.



3. Cleanliness is the key

Part of what gives bugs a bum rap is that they gravitate toward messes. Keeping your home clean is the best way to keep pests away, especially the kitchen where crumbs and other potential treats lurk. Vacuum regularly (once a week is suggested). And on days you don't feel like tossing the trash, make sure your bins are covered or even sealed. Cockroaches hate light and love the smell of paper, so try to avoid clutter areas where bugs can congregate, especially things like stacks of magazines, boxes or bags



4. Don't make your house a bug buffet

How do you get rid of an unwanted human

houseguest? Make your home as un hospitable as possible: when you put the snacks away, the party is over. Pests are no different—they came to grub, so keep food in sealed containers or in the refrigerator. Fresh fruits might make a nice table centerpiece, but bugs can gravitate to them. Also, don't forget those pet bowls. Keep them clean unless you plan on purchasing your next pet its own ant farm.



5. Stay dry

Water is doubly dangerous for encouraging pests. Wet areas serve as both breeding ground and drinking fountain. A sink filled with dirty dishes and standing water is an obvious culprit, but look in less obvious spots, as well. Pipes beneath the sink or in the bathroom can be leaky. If they are, call the plumber. Places like basements and attics can be damp. If you find excessive moisture in these areas, consider a dehumidifier.

Keep in mind, cockroaches especially constantly search for water, thus their more "polite" nickname: "waterbug."



6. Get ants out naturally

In the old days, you would have just grabbed the can of Raid, but now we're all about natural prevention. Luckily, you have plenty of options. Ants in particular hate certain smells. Try cleaning your cupboards with vinegar: Not only does it disinfect, but ants can't stand it. Simple soapy water both kills ants and wipes away their chemical trail to prevent future intruders. You can even break out your spice rack: Ants will shy away from black pepper, cinnamon, mint, red chili powder, and turmeric, just to name a few. Put a light dusting where ants have been spotted. Another pesticide-free trick for repelling ants: Leave fresh cucumber peels in high ant-traffic areas. "I don't know exactly why it works, but I never had sugar ants, unlike everyone else in Florida," says Grandparents.com reader, Nancy D.

And if you really have a mean streak, you can even bait ants to kill them. WikiHow has a couple simple methods to trick them into your traps.

7. Kill cockroaches with this trick

DIY cockroach killers are also relatively

simple to whip up by mixing something roaches love (like sugar or cocoa powder) with something deadly such as Borax or diatomaceous earth. HuffingtonPost.com editors found the Borax method especially effective.



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