

## **Natural remedies for common pest problems** **Compiled by Jen Bulava, Burlington County Parks**

In general, basil, garlic, mint, and lemon thyme work well to repel many species of insect pests. Plant them in pots near the house and any other place you have a pest problem.

Birds, toads, and bats eat thousands of insects. Attract these animals to your home as natural predators to control insect pests. You can place bird houses, bat boxes, and upside-down clay flowerpots with a hole as a “toad abode.”

### Stink Bug Repellents

**Garlic** emits an odor that repels many insects, including stink bugs. In a spray bottle, mix a solution of 2 cups water and 4 tsps garlic powder. Spray this solution onto plant leaves, soil, doorways and any other area that stink bugs tend to migrate to. Repeat every two to three days to keep stink bugs at bay.

**Mint** is another strong herb that will keep stink bugs from polluting your home and lawn. In a spray bottle, mix a solution of 2 cups water and 10 drops of mint essential oil (or 2 tsps of ground mint leaves). Spray this solution onto doorways, plant leaves and soil to keep stink bugs from migrating to your lawn.

**Catnip** also repels stink bugs. Grow catnip in your garden or purchase from your local grocery store. If purchasing catnip powder, simply sprinkle around the garden and home to keep stink bugs from nesting near your home.

You can create your own insecticidal soap by simply mixing 2 cups of water and 10 drops of liquid dish detergent in a spray bottle. Spray this solution onto plant leaves, doorways and window sills. The dish detergent also works as an adhesive, sticking to plant leaves and allowing the effects to last longer. Repeat every few days, as necessary, to keep stink bugs from infesting your lawn.

### Carpenter Bees

Carpenter Bees do not really pose a serious and direct threat to you or your home. They are efficient pollinators, especially of garden vegetables like tomatoes and eggplant, and do not sting. The damage caused by carpenter bees is usually superficial and not serious, but often, it is not nice to see gaping holes on your walls and furniture. Also, they may attract other animals that prey on carpenter bees. Pieces of wood with holes drilled in them can be hung away from your house to attract them to another location if you do not wish to remove them completely from your property. You can also leave a bunch of hollow stems tied in a bundle for them to nest in.

You can get rid of carpenter bees in your deck by covering up their burrows with wood putty, caulk or any other sealant. Spread the sealant across the hole evenly and make sure it is properly sealed. It may look ugly after to have patches of putty or caulk on your woodwork, so consider sanding and painting over it to cover them up. You may want to paint it over again so that it would be less appealing to carpenter bees.

### Ant repellants

For ants indoors, sprinkle cornmeal – they can't digest it, end up starving.

-Ants avoid Cinnamon!

-Sprinkle ground cayenne pepper around the points of entry and ants won't cross over it

-Ants hate the smell of lemon/citrus

Sprinkle cinnamon or cornmeal around the house and under cabinets. Ants don't like cinnamon, and if they eat the cornmeal and then drink water, the cornmeal swells up and kills them. They also carry the

cornmeal to their nest, so the ants there will die as well. You can put cornmeal around outside, but you will have to replace it after it rains. Cinnamon won't hurt anything in the house and will help your house smell good. You can just vacuum and reapply as needed.

The ants need moisture to survive. Clearing leaves away from the foundation of the house outside of the wall where they seem to be entering really decreases the number of ants coming into the house. They can also be attracted to potted plants and a vase of flowers, so during the worst months, keep these away from outside walls of the house.

#### Yellow Jackets

Black & Yellow stripes with yellow legs, nest in ground, logs, or flower beds, Under 1 inch long  
Don't leave human or pet food outside, Keep trash sealed tight

Destroying nests without chemicals:

- Smothering
  - 1.) Fill a wheelbarrow with a load of ice. Dump it over the hole in the evening after the wasps have gone inside.
  - 2.) Cover the hole and the surrounding area with a tarp, big wooden board, sheet metal, or piece of clear plastic; make sure it is weighted down with bricks or heavy objects so the ends are sealed. Nest will suffocate.
  
- Vacuuming
  - 1.) Use a shop vac with the longest extension pole, position it close to the openings of the holes in a cool evening.
  - 2.) Turn on machine first thing next am, let it run for a long time until no wasps are visible. Plug end of shop vac hose right away.
  - 3.) Leave it to sit in the sun to make sure all the wasps die inside before emptying.

#### Flies, fruit flies, and gnats

In a container, mix two tablespoons of apple cider vinegar, 1 tablespoon of sugar, a few drops of liquid dish soap, and 1 liter of water. Mix it well then place the container around the area where you see the most gnats. They will drown in the trap.

Alternatively, you can place apple cider vinegar and some water in a small cereal bowl with tight cling wrap wrapped around the bowl, may need to hold in place with rubber bands if the end of the wrap is not stuck tight to the bowl. Poke small holes in the top of the cling wrap. Fruit flies will enter the holes and get trapped in the vinegar. They can't get back out.

Peppermint oil, clove oil, and lavender oil will repel flies.

#### Cutworms in the garden

Aluminum foil (about 1" high) wrapped around tomato and pepper plant stems will protect them from being eaten by cutworms in the soil.

#### Slugs

Many commercial slug and snail killers are poisonous to birds and other beneficial animals. Use cornmeal on plant leaves, and sprinkle baby powder around the perimeter of a garden to prevent them from crossing. Needs to be reapplied after rain.