

Pest Control: Tips and Secrets from 117 Experts

1. Pest Control: Tips and Secrets from 117 Experts This is the most comprehensive list of pest control tips on the web. Knowing that small steps taken by homeowners can dramatically reduce or eliminate many pest problems, we reached out to over 100 experts and asked them to weigh in with simple, actionable pest control tips.

2. Ultimate pest control guide We asked truly renowned experts from across North America to send us their best tips for pest control. Here are some of the excellent tips we received.

3. Watch for wildlife “National Wildlife Federation encourages people to plant native plants that offer habitat to birds, butterflies, and other backyard wildlife. But we don't want wildlife moving into our homes. Here are some tips to prevent trouble with wildlife. Feeding birds in moderation is ok, but if other wildlife such as bears, raccoons or deer are using bird feeders, take them down for a few weeks.” - David Mizejewski Lifelong naturalist, animal lover and self-professed ‘nature geek,’ National Wildlife Federation

4. Reduce pest hiding places “Roach allergies are a legitimate concern. Some studies show inner city children range from 17-59% sensitivity to roach allergens. Allergies can be created from roach frass (excrement) and caste skins. If cockroaches are a problem indoors, inspect suspected infested rooms 2 hours after normal lights out time. This may provide you with harborage area clues to improve treatment success.” - Jason Meyers Market Development Specialist, BASF Professional & Specialty Solutions

5. Switch your light bulbs “Changing your exterior lights from mercury vapor bulbs to sodium vapor bulbs will reduce the attractiveness of your home to insects. This will also impact the number of predators that feed on insects such as spiders and bats that will no longer be attracted to your home as well.” - David Moore Manager of Technical Services, Dodson Bros. Exterminating Co

6. Keep raccoons away “Raccoons can be pesky, tenacious animals that make homeowners desperate for a solution to the problem of nuisance raccoons. Sometimes, the answer is as simple as clearing the area of any possible food sources. Other times, the answer may be more complex. Here are some non-lethal options for dealing with nuisance raccoons: - Eliminate all possible food sources by securing garbage cans with a bungee strap, ratchet strap or latch.” - Russell Wong Public Information Biologist NC Wildlife Resources Commission

7. Check out the full resource For many more tips from a host of awesome experts, check out our full resource here: <http://www.insightpest.com/pest-control>

8. Skip the bug bombs “Don't use over-the-counter total release aerosols (aka, Bug Bombs)! EPA refuses to ban them because EPA doesn't require efficacy to be proven, just that the products don't harm people and their pets!” - Dr. David Shetlar, “The BugDoc” Professor of Urban Landscape Entomology, Department of Entomology, The Ohio State University

9. Pest control with essential oils “My personal favorite solution for cockroaches lies in your kitchen cabinet. Bay leaves, from a bay tree, is commonly used in cooking due to its pungent and nice smell and flavor. When crushed, these leaves produce a strong fragrance due to the essential oils in the leaves. Leaves can be crushed and sprinkled along baseboards of cabinets, in drawers, or whole leaves can be tied together with string and tied inside closets, cabinets, and drawers. When you keep these crushed leaves on your shelf corners or tucked in drawers, the roaches will immediately run away from those places.” - Dr. Danesha Seth Carley NC Extension Integrated Pest Management Coordinator, Assistant professor, North Carolina State University

10. Two strategies are better than one “You can use two effective methods to win back your yard from fire ants. One is the mound treatment, and the other is the broadcast granule method. Each method uses a different strategy to attack the ants. However, applying both at the same time will optimize results.” - Scotts

11. Don't make pest problems worse “After being in the pest control industry for nearly 30 years, the biggest insider's tip I would give a homeowner is to understand when to DIY and when to call a pro. Homeowners always want to take care of every problem themselves, but when it comes to pest control, think twice. By improperly treating (misapplication) you could be worsening the problem.” - Joseph Molluso Owner, Northeastern Exterminating

12. Simple pest control tactics “Replace exterior light bulbs with yellow bulbs. They're less attractive to bugs like beetles, crickets, moths, and flies. - Make sure the Weather-Stripping on your exterior doors are in good order, and replace if needed. Add Door Sweeps where needed on exterior doors. Replace old door sweeps. Some pests only need a 1/16 inch opening to - Juliea Huffaker Juliea Huffaker, Responsible Pest Control

13. Analyze pest clues “When you know you have a pest that needs solved, begin by gathering the information at hand: Does it scoot, crawl, or fly? How many legs does it have? How many body segments are visible? Where did you find it and what were the environmental circumstances such as temperature and humidity? Can you determine where it originated and where it is going?” - Rob Greer COO, Rove Pest Control

14. Seal off your home 1. Caulk and seal all holes, cracks and crevices of your foundation, windows and doors. 2. Clean, organize and declutter cupboards, closets, and storage units. 3. Discard paper and cardboard boxes, as these attract pests. 4. Seal storage and food items in tight, secure plastic containers. 5. Check pipes and plumbing for leakage. - Eric Scherzinger Manager, Scherzinger Termite & Pest Control

15. Identify bug bites “Far too often people confuse simple skin lesions with "bug bites" and then look for ways to control the "bugs" rather than searching for the real causes of their distress. By not focussing their efforts in the right direction much time is wasted. Allergies (food/respiratory/contact) should be the prime suspect when no insects or mites are found but there can be many other causes of "mysterious bug bites" as well.” - Jack DeAngelis, Associate Professor of Entomology (retired), Oregon State University; Owner, LivingWithBugs

16. Mouse control via sheer numbers “Try using mouse glue boards you can get from about any hardware store. Put a few bacon bits in the middle of the trap as a food attractant. Mice tend to run along walls so put the traps up against walls, under all sinks, and pull the bottom drawers out in the kitchen and bathrooms and put a glue board against the wall and then replace the drawer. Don’t just use 2 or 3 traps, use a bunch (20- 30) and overwhelm them.” - J Brad Parker President, Parker Pest Control; President, Oklahoma Pest Control Association

17. Magnify what’s bugging you “Homeowners who are interested in pest management within and around their homes must first determine the type of pest that they are dealing with. In many cases, the pest insect or other arthropod will be small and difficult to see. I therefore recommend the purchase of a binocular magnifier, preferably one that will be able to create a digital image.” - Dr. Steven R. Sims, Blue Imago LLC; Contributing Editor, Mallis Handbook of Pest Control

18. Termites: stay ahead of the curve “Unfortunately, termite damage typically isn't covered by homeowners' insurance and all too many people discover the problem only after it's too late. We advocate regular inspections from a professional and prompt treatment should any problems arise.” - Donnie Shelton Owner, Triangle Pest Control; At-Large Director, North Carolina Pest Management Association

19. Organic pest control - snack on bugs “When it comes to insects, we're missing the boat by NOT eating them. They say that 80 percent of our world's cultures eat insects. Insects are rich in protein, vitamins and minerals and other micronutrients. And they are plentiful. What's not to like? Many of our most common pantry pests: rice weevils, for example, or mealy moths or ants are perfectly edible. I'll go one step further: if they are properly prepared, they can be downright delicious.” - David George Gordon, Author, The Eat-a-Bug Cookbook, “The Bug Chef”

20. Skip the detergent “Do not use dish soaps or detergents to control insect or mite pests. Dishwashing liquids and laundry detergents such Palmolive, Dawn, Ivory, Joy, Tide, and Dove are primarily designed to dissolve grease from dishes and clean clothes; not kill insect and mite pests. Furthermore, these materials contain coloring agents, perfumes, and degreasers that may cause plant injury (=phytotoxicity) by dissolving the waxy cuticle on leaf surfaces.” - Dr. Raymond A. Cloyd Professor and Extension Specialist in Horticultural Entomology/Plant Protection, Department of Entomology, Kansas State University

21. Seal for stink bug control “To help keep the marmorated stink bug and other insects from entering your house in the fall be sure to seal voids around doors and windows roof vents and place screening over attic vents, etc... If you use window or wall air conditioners, covering or removing them in the fall will help prevent stink bugs and other insects from entering.” - Dr. George Hamilton Professor and chair, Department of Entomology, Rutgers University

22. Bait to control fire ants “Granular baits are one of the best treatments for controlling fire ants in southern lawns. When used properly, baits are quick and easy to apply; reasonably safe to people, pets and wildlife; affordable; and effective. The key to using baits successfully is to spread them over the whole yard rather than treating individual mounds, and to apply them preventively, about three times

per year: spring, summer, and fall.” - Dr. Blake Layton Extension Entomology Specialist, Mississippi State University Extension Service

23. Don't fear the lizards “Finding a lizard in your garage or home might be frightening to many homeowners. Before you panic, remember that these lizards, typically geckos, are great at hunting insects and do not pose a threat to you or your family. To prevent them from getting inside, try lowering the thermostat and taking steps to reduce humidity indoors, in addition to sealing entry points (around doors and windows) and getting rid of their food source.” - Dr. Bennett Jordan Staff Entomologist, National Pest Management Association

24. Flies and filth “Most people do not realize flies carry more disease-causing pathogens than cockroaches. By simply cleaning up animal feces and closing trash cans we can reduce the number of places that filth flies can breed.” - David Moore, Manager of Technical Services, Dodson Bros. Exterminating Co

25. Not just for babies “Johnson's Baby Powder on exposed skin will help control mosquito bites. The powder dries up pores, reducing the carbon dioxide emissions that attract mosquitos to human skin.” - Thomas Gray General Manager, Forshaw

26. Compare pest control companies “1. Get References. Ask family, friends or co-workers for recommendations; find online user reviews. 2. Visit the company's website. Does it appear professional? Is there a general overview of its service—and the pest you need controlled? Does its philosophy match your own? 3. Call the company. Don't be afraid to call a few companies for comparison.” - Lisa Jo Lupo About Pest Control for Homeowners About.com

27. Honey - pest control for ants “If you suspect ants (other than carpenter ants) are coming into the structure from the outside, place honey smears at the base of the foundation and soil every 10 ft. Inspect the smears within 15-20 min. to determine where ants are coming from. Follow worker ants feeding on the honey as they travel back to their nest/colony. Then, either contact a pest management professional with this information or if it is a "do it yourself" project, spot treat the nest sites with a product labeled specifically for that use.” - Robert Hickman, Market Development Specialist, BASF Professional & Specialty Solutions

28. Evaluate your pest concern “The fact that an insect is eating your plants doesn't necessarily mean you need to get rid of it. Spend some time observing it and reading up on it before you rush to judgment. More often than not, you'll find that insects are not causing significant damage. Leafminers, for instance, often cause concern because they leave conspicuous trails, but with a few exceptions the problem is entirely aesthetic.” - Charley Eiseman Ecological Consultant Author, "Tracks & Sign of Insects and Other Invertebrates" Owner, BugTracks Contributing Editor, BugGuide

29. Reduce clutter to reduce pests “Cluttered storage areas are prime real estate for mice, spiders, cockroaches and other pests. You can keep pests away by regularly cleaning and reorganizing your basement, garage and other storage areas. Replace flimsy cardboard boxes with durable plastic totes

that are less likely to disintegrate and be chewed up by pests.” - Chris Quinn Operations Director
Catseye Pest Control

30. Prevent and combat wasps “Wasps, including, paper wasps, yellow jackets and bald-faced hornets, are beneficial and generally do not sting unless disturbed, threatened, or harmed. To prevent unwanted wasps: remove fallen fruits, spilled food and drinks, soft drink cans, and garbage; avoid scents and brightly colored materials; and keep your house, dumpster, garage, and attic clean.” - Todd Leyse
President, Adam’s Pest Control

31. Reduce spider incentives “Homeowners can very easily reduce the spider populations in and around their home by making a few small changes. Exterior clutter like leaf piles, firewood, and construction debris should be kept to a minimum to eliminate harborage areas. Keeping gutters and other areas free of standing water will also help in the reduction of breeding areas for the insects that spiders feed upon.” - Jeff Patton, Commercial Service Manager, Alpha Ecological Pest Control

32. The best control: Exclude the pests “The best pest proofing tip is exclusion - find out how pests are entering your home and take the proper steps to seal it to prevent further infestations.”

33. Control pests in the right spots “What are crack and crevice (C&C) treatments and why should I care? Control of pests increases and pesticide use is reduced when crack-and-crevice straws are used and inserted 1/4 inch into a crack during application. Moving the straw along the length of a crack as part of a C&C treatment improves the coverage of liquid insecticide on surfaces contacted by cockroaches and other pests.” - Bill Robinson Technical Director, B&G Equipment Co.; Director, Urban Pest Control
Research Center

34. Understand the risk “Termites put your home at risk for serious and expensive damage that could turn your biggest investment into your biggest expense. What’s worse, termites may have been quietly eating your house from the inside out without your knowledge. Termites live in soil and forage for food and water. If they encounter your home’s foundation while foraging, they’ll follow any crack, crevice or plumbing line into your house. (They only need an opening 1/32-inch wide.)” - Joe Barile, Technical
Service Lead, PPM/Vector, Bayer Environmental Science

35. Host a bug-free outdoor event “Spray down flowering plants with garden hose. Perform this task immediately prior to your function. This act will mimic a rain shower and pollinating insects will stay away until plants dry out. If you wet them down well enough, activity will be suppressed for about two hours. Place an oscillating fan in the sitting area. Creating this air current will deter flying and biting insects from the area. Most are fragile flyers and will stay away from the Jetstream.” - Joe Fryer Director
of Operations, JP McHale Pest Management Inc.

36. Keep it clean “Wash out all food containers before placing in the recycling. Also, if you have a stove with a lower drawer either for pots and pans or a warming drawer, make sure this is kept clean. More often than not, when this is pulled out there are food crumbs in the drawer which roaches, ants etc. love to feed on. A little prevention goes a long way.” - Steve Parker, Owner, Knockout Pest Management

37. Look for pest evidence “The key to knowing if you have an active bed bug infestation is to produce a live sample of a bed bug or see black, fecal spotting. Do not automatically assume that any bite-like mark is a bed bug bite.” - Jeff White Director of Innovation and Technical Content, BedBug Central

38. Protect honey bees “Not all bees are pests! In fact, one in three bites of food is reliant on honey bee pollination. However, with wide-scale population declines, honey bees and wild pollinators desperately need a refuge to protect themselves from pesticide contamination. To develop a pollinator and bee-friendly habitat in your own backyard, consider their three basic needs: 1. Protection from toxic pesticides. 2. A source of food and water. 3. A sheltered place to lay their eggs.” - Nikita Naik Program Associate Beyond Pesticides

39. Relax, don't do it “If you see a spider in your house, don't freak out. They are not out to get you. They do not hunt or eat people. Spiders use their venom to catch, kill and pre-digest their food. They have little fangs and can't chew so the venom turns their catch into an insect smoothie, that they slurp up into their little mouths. Take a deep breath, give it a name and put it outside. No need to spray everything in your house.” - Kristie Reddick thebugchicks.com

40. Have a new home inspected “In our service area of NYC, bed bugs are becoming a big problem with homeowners. At one time, termites were pulling in all the revenue. Now it's bed bugs everywhere you look. We suggest, when buying or selling a home, the homeowners should have a bed bug inspection performed.” - Joseph Molluso Owner, Northeastern Exterminating

41. A natural fly repellent “Add fresh basil and mint leaves to a glass jar along with a sliced lime and split vanilla bean. Cover with white vinegar and steep for two weeks, shaking every few days. Strain into a spray bottle and use as a natural fly repellent for yourself, your horses, your chicken coop or anywhere else the flies are congregating.” - Lisa Steele Founder, www.fresheggdaily.com

42. Keep gutters clean “Regularly clean your gutters to prevent mosquito breeding and potential subterranean termite activity, especially Formosan subterranean termites.” - Dr. Matthew T. Messenger Program Manager and Staff Entomologist, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA; Subject editor, Journal of Integrated Pest Management, Entomological Society of America

43. The cheesy truth about rodent control “Mice far prefer foods with high protein and fat content over cheese. That's why the best mouse trap baits include peanut butter, hazelnut spread, chocolate, and meats like bacon or beef jerky. When using a snap trap, place a small amount of bait on the trigger. Be wary of large portions, which rodents can nibble without tripping the trap.” - Boris Bajlovic Senior Category Development Manager, Victor Pest

44. Check for unwanted visitors “If you suspect you have a wildlife problem, performing an inspection is the next step for DIY- minded homeowners. Here are some tips for doing an inspection on your own: Realize that most likely you will never see the opossum, raccoon, etc., but you should be able to tell he/she has been there. First, walk around the outside of your home and determine if there are any entry points (open vents, torn screen, unsecured crawl space door, etc.).” - Todd Axten Service Manager, Wildlife Expert, Insight Pest Solutions

45. Back to pest control basics “Tip for residents: Clean-up, clear-up, seal-up, repeat. Still have challenges? Call the experts, and ask how you can partner with your pest management company to maintain your home pest-free.” - Dr. Dawn H. Gouge Associate Professor and Associate Specialist, Department of Entomology University of Arizona

46. Diagnose pests correctly “Accurate problem diagnosis is difficult, but misdiagnosis is easy. The causes of pest-related problems aren’t always easy to determine, but correct diagnosis often is critical for remediation. Many homeowners aren’t familiar with some of the odd-looking insects like scale insects and mealybugs. For example, the cause of damage by June beetles, cutworms, slugs and snails often remains a mystery because the insects are not active during the daytime when the damage is discovered. The lesson here is that if you aren’t sure what is causing the problem, take it to a qualified person for diagnosis.” - Dr. John L. Capinera Emeritus Professor Entomology & Nematology Department University of Florida

47. Be inhospitable to bugs “Everyone wants a silver bullet, no one wants to have to invest elbow grease; but that’s the underlying trick to long-term pest suppression – making the environment inhospitable to the pest. Clean up whatever is attracting them, and seal them out. Prevent their access to food and they’ll starve. Get rid of clutter and they won’t have a place to hide. Just about any pest we mention can be significantly reduced by these two measures – cleaning up and keeping them out.” - Dr. Nancy Hinkle Professor, Department of Entomology, University of Georgia; Contributing editor, Mallis Handbook of Pest Control

48. Try mosquito-eating fish “ Adjust sprinklers to prevent over-watering, which can create ideal conditions for mosquito breeding. Fill any tree holes or tree stumps with a sealant or mortar to prevent water accumulation. Treat standing water with a product to control mosquito larvae. Stock ornamental ponds with mosquito-eating fish such as western mosquitofish, goldfish and guppies.” - Syngenta Professional Pest Management

49. Don’t store wood near your home “Termites are a pain; take a few precautions to try and avoid them. Limit food and habitat as much as possible. Store your wood pile away from your home. Wood stacked against your house is an open invitation to termites. Make sure the ground level is a few inches lower than the slab, don’t let leaves, your lawn or flowerbed mulch cover up the slab. This will give you a better chance at quickly spotting termite tubes.” - Keld Ewart Marketing Coordinator, The Bug Master Exterminating

50. Avoid pest souvenirs “Bed bugs are exceptional hitchhikers. For travelers, avoid bringing them home from trips; Thoroughly inspect hotel rooms, select the proper hard-shell suitcase, keep your luggage above ground - not on the floor, and wash and dry clothes as soon as you get home.” - Scott Svenheim Associate Certified Entomologist, Truly Nolen

51. Don’t fall for the fly spray “When you get a termite swarm inside your home, you panic! You spray some fly spray and they go away. You may have killed a few swarmers but the colony is still hard at work. When you see swarmers inside your home you need some form of termite treatment. It's funny to

me, just how many people repeat this process year after year.” - Mike Dukes Editor-in-chief, TermiteMD.com

52. Smart bee control: Ask for help “Dealing with honey bees almost always requires professional intervention. Never attempt to control them yourself. Do not plug or cover any exterior holes you see the bees entering and exiting from. This may lead to the bees looking for another exit which may lead them to the interior of your home. Unless safety is a concern it may be best to leave the bees alone. Removal usually requires the dismantling of the wall in which the bees have chosen to build the hive. Removal can be costly and should be done by a professional.” - Sam Smith Director of Operations, Insight Pest Solutions

53. Compare pictures “Do you even have bed bugs? Look at pictures of bed bugs and all of their life stages on reliable internet sources. They are NOT too small to see. Pest Management Professionals still get calls on a vast amount of incorrectly identified "bed bugs". If you find or suspect bed bugs in your home, call a pest management professional you trust and that is trained in bed bug treatments to conduct the treatment. Bed bugs are difficult to control and usually "do it yourself" efforts are unsuccessful and may actually make infestations worse.” - Jason Meyers Market Development Specialist, BASF Professional & Specialty Solutions

54. DIY pest control: Freeze your flour “When purchasing flour or grains, store them in the freezer for one week to kill any eggs (Yup! Flour and grains often enter the house with eggs already laid, gross as that is.) After the week in the freezer, the grains/flour can be safely stored on a pantry shelf.” - Kristen Cross www.thefrugalgirl.com

55. Don't overdo the mulch “Most homeowners are totally unaware of this and it's such an easy thing to prevent pests from entering the home. Make sure your flower beds and mulch are at least 6" below the sill plate of your home. Many homeowners have the mulch all the way up to the sill plate of the home and this creates a great entry way for all sorts of pests! (Follow) this tip with continued maintenance and you'll rid yourself of those pesky pests.” - Alan Luxmore TV host, “Fix this Yard,” A&E; Contractor, “Picker Sisters,” Lifetime

56. Knowledge = pest control “Whether you are a seasoned pest control expert, or an average homeowner with little pest control expertise, you need to learn the basics of the pest you are dealing with. Many times, we find an overabundance of information online concerning the handling of drain flies, or cockroaches for example. If you can simplify the source of the infestation, the basic life history of your pest, and the most effective control method you will be successful more often than not.” - Andrew Taylor Technical Director, Clegg's Termite and Pest Control

57. Think about the pests' perspective “All critters (no matter how many legs they have) need the same survival tools we need - Food, Water and Shelter. My advice is to exclude pests by reducing any opportunity for these needs.” - Robin Mountjoy General manager and president, Connor's Pest Control

58. Cap your chimney “Chimneys are frequented by squirrels, raccoon, bats and birds, and represent the single largest opening to your home. The installation of an inexpensive chimney cap can save you from

having an animal loose in your home, causing damage and a possible face-to-face confrontation.” - Sean Carruth Vice President, Critter Control, Inc

59. Wait it out: No worries “Every year I get many homeowners calling or coming to my office with questions on critters in or around their home. Often I end up telling them that there is no “problem”. Just because something is present or is causing minor injury to a plant doesn’t mean that it will cause serious damage over the long term. Nature has a funny way of taking care of itself.” - Dr. Chris Cutler Associate Professor, Department of Environmental Sciences, Dalhousie University

60. Love the ladybugs “Ladybugs are part of a gardener’s arsenal during the growing season, and can help you fight off aphids and other pests on at- risk plants such as tomatoes. If your garden isn’t a natural habitat for ladybugs, you can buy them via mail-order and they will arrive in a chilled dormant state; you can then release them into your garden.” - Terry Lea Managing editor Davesgarden.com

61. Find more tips: There are over 55 more expert tips in our pest control guide. Check it out here: <http://www.insightpest.com/pest-control>