

Pest Gazette



Winterize Your Home in 10 Easy Steps

Here are a few tips to help keep your home safe, sound and pest-free this winter:

1. Trim away any tree branches that come in contact with the house. Ants and wildlife can use these branches to come into our warm homes.
2. Make sure that you have a chimney cap properly installed to prevent birds, rodents and wildlife from entering.
3. Inspect your hose bibs and make sure they are not leaking. If there is a cut-off valve, close it so that your pipes don't burst.
4. Watch the humidity in your basement or crawl space. Dehumidifiers can reduce chances of fungus, stale smell, and insects.
5. Look for any wood in contact with the soil near the house. This can lead to termites.
6. Look for signs of burrowing near the foundation or under decks. This could indicate a possible rodent or wildlife infestation.
7. Keep garage doors closed especially after dusk. Open doors allow mice, rats, and wildlife in.
8. Store pet food and birdseed in plastic bins with tightly fitted tops.
9. Keep all garbage in closed containers both inside and outside the house.
10. Seal any holes in the foundation or anywhere insects or rodents might enter. Add weatherstripping under doors to save energy and to exclude pests.

Shoo Fly!

What do you do when a fly visits your table while you are having lunch in a restaurant? Most people casually wave

their hand to shoo the fly away and go back to eating. But what would happen if a cockroach ran across the table? You would call for the manager, complain about the cleanliness of the establishment and leave the restaurant in a huff, right? For many people, the difference between a "harmless" fly and a "nasty" cockroach is immense, but there are many similarities, and in some ways flies can even be worse because of the carefree attitude that many people have toward this pest.

Similar to cockroaches, house flies are associated with filthy environments and waste. Scientists

have determined that house flies can carry up to 100 pathogens that cause disease including bacteria that cause food poisoning (ex. salmonella, E.coli), dysentery, cholera, and many other communicable diseases. House flies carry these pathogens on their body hairs, feet, and mouths. Flies only need to rest on a surface for a few moments to transfer these germs from one surface to another.

One of the reasons that house flies make excellent vehicles for transmission of disease causing organisms is their high level of mobility, flying from

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Squirrels

In many parts of the country, squirrels are the most common form of backyard wildlife and many people enjoy feeding squirrels to get a better look at the playful antics and acrobatic activities which make them a delight to watch. Unfortunately, just like other forms of wildlife, squirrels can cause damage to homes and can become pests in urban and suburban environments. Having a simple understanding of their behavior and taking precautions to prevent conflicts will make it possible to enjoy squirrels in their environment, not yours.

Squirrels are rodents, but are more closely related to groundhogs and chipmunks than rats or mice. The most common squirrel is the Eastern Gray Squirrel which ranges across the entire eastern half of the United States. The Western Gray Squirrel is found in the western states. Another common species is the Red Squirrel, which is located in the northeastern and western states.

Squirrels naturally nest in tree cavities or in nests constructed of twigs and sticks lined with leaves, grass and feathers. The preferred nesting area of squirrels is in a tree cavity, but in urban and suburban areas trees containing cavities are typically removed, so leaf nests may be more common

To make your home less hospitable to squirrels looking for a place to spend the winter, follow these tips:

- Squirrels only need a hole the size of a baseball to squeeze into a cavity. Perform a visual inspection of your home regularly. Repair water damaged, rotten or broken wood that may allow squirrels to enter attics.
- Keep rain gutters clear to avoid water damage to fascia boards. Water damaged wood is easy for squirrels to gnaw through.
- Keep attic vents screened. If there is a high level of squirrel activity in your neighborhood, you might consider heavy duty screens or hardware cloth to prevent squirrels from entering.
- Refrain from feeding squirrels close to the house. Protect backyard bird feeders with squirrel proof devices.

even though squirrels are more likely to survive the winter in a cavity nest. In the autumn, young squirrels leave their mother's territory to strike out on their own in search of a suitable place to build a nest.

During the search for a suitable habitat, young squirrels may travel 50 miles or more in search of better habitat. In urban and suburban neighborhoods some squirrels may be attracted to the quiet, warm spaces inside attics to build their nest. Once a squirrel invades an attic, it can cause substantial damage. Squirrels can chew through electrical, cable and telephone wires causing short circuits or even fires. In the process of creating their nest, squirrels may tunnel through and disturb attic insulation reducing the energy efficiency of a home. In addition, squirrels will use the attic as a latrine, soiling insulation, stored goods and creating unsanitary conditions.

If you suspect that a squirrel has invaded your home, call a professional! Although squirrels rarely bite and are not considered an important carrier of rabies, never try to handle or capture a squirrel yourself. Scratches or defensive bites can be painful and may result in infection. Professionals will know the local laws and regulations regarding nuisance wildlife removal and will take care not to strand baby squirrels inside the home after the mother has been removed.

Squirrels are a wonderful addition to the biodiversity of your backyard and can result in hours of fascinating observations. But just like any other animal, when it comes into conflict with humans by causing disease or damage, it's a pest. Do your part to keep squirrels where they belong ... outside. ■

House Flies (continued from page 1)

one source of food to another. Keep in mind that house flies don't discriminate between last night's garbage and this meal's garnish, so they might have just come from some pretty nasty places before they land on your kitchen counter top. Another reason that makes house flies such a good carrier of disease is that they are unable to bite or chew solid foods. House flies have sponge-like mouthparts that require them to use saliva to liquefy foods before ingesting them, which exposes the surfaces on which they land to the germs that are inside their mouths from their last feeding location.

To prevent flies from entering your home, check to make sure that all windows have well fitting screens and that all of the screens are in good repair (i.e. no tears, rips or holes). Make sure that indoor garbage receptacles are cleaned frequently, especially if a trash can liner gets torn and any of the contents spill into the can. Outdoors, it's important to make sure that all refuse cans have tight fitting lids and pet waste is removed frequently. Neglected compost bins can also be a breeding ground for house flies. Since houseflies are attracted to decaying organic matter, make sure that compost bins are well maintained and actively working. The center of a healthy, frequently turned compost pile will be too hot for the proper development of large numbers of flies.

House flies are more than just a nuisance; they can be a serious health threat by transmitting food borne illness and communicable diseases. Keep this in mind the next time you casually wave your hand at a passing fly in your favorite restaurant because house flies are as dirty as cockroaches! ■



90% of structure infesting fly species are house flies.

An adult house fly lives about 30 days.

Houseflies have sponge-like mouth parts and only ingest liquefied food.

House flies are known to carry over 100 pathogens.

eeewww!



Insects like these boxelder bugs congregate in warm sunny areas, like the south side of your house, on crisp autumn days then seek nearby shelter to protect themselves from the elements.

Seal Entry Points to Keep Out Autumn Invaders

As temperatures cool and warm summer nights fade into crisp autumn evenings, many outdoor insects begin looking for a warm place to spend the winter. Insects such as Elm Leaf Beetles, Multicolored Asian Lady Beetles, Boxelder Bugs, Brown Marmorated Stink Bugs and Cluster Flies will congregate in warm sunny areas on crisp autumn days then seek nearby shelter to protect themselves from the elements as temperatures cool.

Often, the first sign of an overwintering pest problem is a large group of insects congregating on the side of a building. Usually, they seek warm sunny areas with southern exposure. Since insects are cold-blooded animals (they cannot maintain their body temperatures independent of the surrounding environment) they must use the sun's warming rays to warm their bodies. These populations can sometimes be quite large with hundreds or thousands of insects taking advantage of the heat from the sunshine.

The next step in the autumn invasion happens when temperature begins to cool in the evenings. The large aggregations of insects that were sun bathing on the side of the house begin to look for a protected place to insulate themselves from the cold weather. Often, the result is large numbers of insects seeking shelter beneath vinyl, brick or aluminum siding, crawling into open soffit or attic vents during the evening, and ven-

turing outside on sunny days to catch some more rays. As the weather continues to cool the insects become less and less active, finally settling into your home to overwinter. On warm sunny days during the winter these pests may emerge from their hiding places, often into the living spaces of your home.

Although it is difficult to stop these pests from visiting the outside of your home, there are some simple steps that can be taken to minimize the chances of these pests spending the entire winter inside your house. First, use caulk to seal cracks and crevices around windows and doors. Not only will this keep bugs out year round, it also can help make your home more energy efficient. Next, make sure that all soffit vent screens are in good repair (the soffit is an area underneath the overhang of your roof). Seal any obvious cracks or crevices where pests may enter. Finally, check the vents in your attic. The vents should be screened to keep out overwintering insects as well as other pests like squirrels and wasps.

Sealing every potential entry point is difficult, so if this seems like a job that is too big to handle yourself, call your pest management professional for help. A proactive and preventative approach to pest control is the smartest, most effective way to deal with invading autumn pests. ■

To help keep chilly bugs OUT of your house, use caulk to seal cracks and crevices around windows and doors.

