

Spring has sprung

How to control common pests that appear this time of year

Just when winter thaws out and people are anxious to enjoy the blooming flowers and luscious lawns of spring, pesky pests can appear and impact comfort levels and safety. Many pests resume their levels of activity as spring draws closer and temperatures warm up. The presence of these insects and rodents may cause problems in and around a home, which makes it essential to recognize them and avoid issues. The following are some of the more common spring pests and how to remedy infestations.

PAVEMENT ANTS

Pavement ants are some of the most common pests residents encounter inside and outside of their homes. These ants are light brown to black with appendages that are lighter than the rest of their bodies. Small in stature, pavement ants have parallel lines on their heads and thorax, according to pest extermination company Orkin. Although pavement ants nest outdoors, they can enter homes through small crevices in search of food scraps. Their large colonies may not disappear until treatment is introduced. Keep foods in tightly sealed containers, clear counters and floors of crumbs, and address water sources, such as leaks. Pesticides may be needed in extreme conditions.

FLEAS

Fleas are tiny, jumping, biting pests that must find a host upon which to live. As ectoparasites, they feed on blood while living on the body of living hosts. Pets can bring fleas inside the yard and home in warm weather. According to the University of California Statewide Integrated Pest Management Program, flea larvae develop more quickly at higher temperatures. At normal room temperatures, the entire life cycle of a flea is about 18 days. Several flea control products are available to control fleas on cats and dogs. There also may be powders and sprays to alleviate flea infestations in the home. Vacuuming is also very effective in killing larvae in the carpet and at picking up adults.

SPIDERS

Many spiders are not harmful enough to humans and pets to be much of a problem. In fact, spiders can be helpful to have around to control the populations of other insects. Still, many homeowners would prefer these web-slinging friends remain outdoors. Therefore, sealing cracks in a home's foundation and repairing small openings around windows and doors can help keep spiders out. Also, alleviating moisture issues in basements, garages or attics may keep out other bugs that would be prey to spiders. Homeowners can take the steps necessary to cut down on pests in and around their homes.

Complete these home improvements over the weekend

Home improvement projects ramp up when the weather warms up, as homeowners channel the rejuvenating feelings of spring and tackle their home to-do lists. Large-scale renovations can greatly affect a home, but smaller projects can yield impressive results and be completed over the course of a single weekend. If time is of the essence, these weekend or one-day projects may satisfy homeowners' desires to fix up their homes.

- **CREATE AN ACCENT WALL.** Painting a focal wall in a home can create a serious impact. The bonus is it will not take as long or require as many materials as painting an entire room. Accent walls frequently feature a bold color, so decide on

new fixtures. New faucets can provide aesthetic appeal and low-flow faucets can help conserve water.

- **CREATE A GALLERY ON THE STAIRCASE.** Gather and arrange framed photos, artwork or wall accents so that they ascend the wall of a staircase. This creates a designer touch and can dress up an often barren area of wall space.
- **INSTALL A FRESH LIGHT FIXTURE.** Improve drab spaces with a little illumination. Better

placement and tackle this project in less than a day.

- **INSTALL STAIR RUNNERS.** Dress up hardwood stairs with decorative carpet runners. Runners come in elongated pieces of carpeting or individual pieces that can be placed on each step. If carpeting doesn't fit with the home's design, painting individual stair treads also can create visual appeal.
- **DRESS UP THE ENTRYWAY.** An entryway is a guest's first impression of a home. Many entryways can use a minor overhaul, both inside and outside. Paint the front door a different color so it pops from the curb. Install a new mailbox or decorative house numbers. A new welcome mat can change the look as well. Inside, consider laying a new floor. Resilient vinyl tiles come in many different patterns and can mimic the look of wood, travertine or marble. Installing a floor can take a day or two.
- **INSTALL A NEW FAUCET.** Instantly improve a kitchen or a bathroom with

Homes & Gardens suggests replacing an existing fixture with something new and vibrant. If hanging a new fixture is not within one's skill set, free-standing table or floor lamps also can cast a new glow on a space.

- **ADD MOLDING.** Molding can add instant aesthetic appeal to a room. Molding is appropriate near the floor, at the top of walls where they meet the ceiling, or even mid-wall as a chair rail. Some homeowners like to create framed molding on walls in formal living spaces.
- **UPDATE KITCHEN OR BATHROOM HARDWARE.** Replacing hardware is a fast and easy project, but one that can have immediate impact. Swap out tired or outdated hardware for newer brushed metals and more impactful shapes and designs. Home renovations do not need to take weeks or months. Many projects can be completed over the course of a weekend.



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When it can be smart to hire a painting pro

Few things can revitalize a home than a fresh coat of paint. Thanks in part to the affordability of paint and its ease of application, painting is something that even novice DIYers can typically handle. According to the marketing advice guru Brandon Gaille, it is estimated that residential interior paint lasts around three years before it needs to be updated. Exterior paint can fade, chip and peel due to environmental factors. As a result, many homes can likely use a fresh coat of paint in at least one room.

As DIY-friendly as painting can be, when attempting to paint the interior or exterior of their homes, homeowners may learn that some painting projects are best left to the professionals. Painting requires skill, patience and a knowledge of how various paints - including finishes for particular applications - will hold up. Novice painters may do more harm than good by dripping paint on expensive carpeting or floors or fail to recognize the nuances that indicate a spot-on painting job.

Professional painters have spent hours upon hours learning the ropes of what works — and what does not. Painters often understand that painstaking preparatory work is crucial to getting pristine finished results. Walls and ceilings must be properly repaired and prepared even before a base coat is applied.

Professional painters also have an eye for details. And because professional painters make a business out of doing interior and exterior surfaces, they understand which techniques can improve efficiency. That means a professional job can typically be completed much more quickly than a DIY project.

