

Can This Get Rid of Fruit Flies in Your Kitchen?

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✓ Fact Checked

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Fruit flies look like small flies or gnats, multiply quickly and can be a problem year-round. The best way to avoid the problem is to eliminate the source of food, which is ripened and fermenting fruit and vegetables
- › Some propose using an insecticide to eradicate a fruit fly problem, but there are definitely healthier ways to get rid of the annoying insects. Fruit fly traps can be made with apple cider vinegar and plastic wrap, but another that appears to have more success is made with a paper funnel, jar, fruit and tape
- › Household cleaners can be just as damaging to your lungs as cigarettes; consider white vinegar for a fabric softener, baking soda to clean your drains, oven and carpets, and rubber gloves to remove pet hair from your furniture
- › Did you know that denture tablets can help keep the toilet clean, you should never clean your shower tile with white vinegar, and you can make organic fertilizer using pasta water? Stay off ladders in the fall and still get your gutters clean by spending 10 minutes making a gutter wand that hooks to your garden hose
- › Getting small and large spaces organized can be challenging. Consider how to use magazine holders, hanging shoe organizers, ice trays and empty toilet paper rolls to organize your space. A pallet in the garage can keep long-handled garden equipment together and this simple dryer trick can eliminate a lot of ironing

Fruit flies (*Drosophila melanogaster*) look like small flies or gnats. They can be a problem year-round, but are especially common in the summer and fall months. These

pesky little flies seem to appear out of nowhere and multiply at a rapid pace. Fruit flies are attracted to the scent of ripened or fermenting produce. Adults reach about one-eighth inch in length and have red eyes.

They lay eggs near the surface of fermenting fruit or other organic materials. When the tiny larvae emerge, they feed on this fermenting mass. Given the opportunity, one fruit fly can lay 500 eggs and will complete a life cycle from egg to adult in about one week.¹

The best way to avoid the issue is to eliminate the source. Any produce that is ripened should not be left on the counter, but either eaten, refrigerated or discarded. Any damaged portion of the fruit or vegetable should be cut away and discarded since it may contain eggs or larvae.

Once fruit flies have entered the house, all areas containing any rotting food must be located and eliminated. This includes where juice may have spilled under the refrigerator, or a potato is rotting at the back of a closet. After the source of attraction is eliminated, then it's time to get rid of the fruit flies that are in the house.

Fruit flies are just one potential challenge that can pop up at home. After discussing how to get rid of fruit flies without damaging chemicals, we'll dive into other healthy ways of managing home maintenance, cleaning and getting organized.

Fruit Fly, Don't Bother Me

While some advocate using a pyrethrum-based insecticide² there are definitely healthier and more natural ways of getting rid of the annoying flying insects. The most popular method has been an apple cider vinegar trap.³

The trap is made by filling a bowl or glass with apple cider vinegar and covering the opening with plastic wrap. Poke small holes in the top and leave the container out to attract the flies. Fruit flies are attracted to the scent of apple cider vinegar and will enter the glass or bowl through the small holes in the plastic wrap. Once they're in, they can't get out.

Tom's Guide lists a few more ways of trapping fruit flies, including using dishwasher detergent with apple cider vinegar to decrease the surface tension so when they land on the apple cider vinegar they drown. Bottles of old beer and wine also attract fruit flies and because the bottleneck is narrow, they can't escape.

The U.S. Sun calls Sara Snell (TikTok HappyHome_withSara79) a “savvy homeowner” who may have made fruit flies “a problem of the past.”⁴ They featured her solution to a home invasion of fruit flies, which includes some rotting fruit, a piece of paper, a jar and a few strips of tape.

Sara places some fruit at the bottom of the jar and forms the paper into a cone shape with a small hole at the bottom. The top of the cone becomes as wide as the mouth of the jar and the paper is then taped into place. The smell of the rotting fruit attracts the fruit flies, but the size of the hole is so small they cannot get out again.

According to The U.S. Sun, the post went viral and quickly garnered 1.4 million views and currently has over 200 comments. This is just one video on Sara's channel⁵ where she features information about low-tox living, cleaning, organizing and cooking.

Healthy Cleaning Hacks

Household cleaners are as dangerous for your lungs as long-term smoking. Research⁶ from the University of Bergen and Norway demonstrated that **cleaning once a week** with cleaning products for 20 years is equivalent to smoking 20 cigarettes a day for 10 to 20 years. The following are nontoxic, healthier ways of cleaning your home and protecting your health.

Fabric softener — Sara features a short video⁷ on her channel about how bad fabric softener is for the environment and people. In the video, the narrator mentions the many service calls that are directly related to people using fabric softeners. Instead, use a cup of white vinegar in your machine — it softens the clothes and helps keep the pipes clean.

Fireplace – Line the bottom of the fireplace with foil for easy clean up.⁸ The foil protects the base of your fireplace from damage from heat and abrasion, while extending its life. After the fire is finished and the ashes have cooled, simply fold it with the ashes inside and toss. No more sweeping ashes or getting them on the floor.

Oven cleaner, drain cleaner and carpet deodorizer – Baking soda was used to clean 99 years' worth of coal tar from the Statue of Liberty in 1986,⁹ so there's a good chance it can remove dirt and grime around your house too. Use one cup or more over the bottom of the oven to remove food and grease. Add water to make a thick paste and let it sit overnight before cleaning the next day.

Clean your drains by pouring one-half to 1 cup of baking soda down the drain and then slowly pouring one-half to 1 cup of vinegar after it. Let this sit for 15 minutes and flush it with 1 gallon of boiling water. Deodorize your carpet by sprinkling baking soda on it and waiting 15 minutes before vacuuming thoroughly.

Drain cleaner – If you have a particularly stubborn drain, consider using a wet-dry vacuum to suck out hair and debris first. You can increase suction by creating a seal between the nozzle and the drain with a wet rag.

No iron, wrinkles are gone – Ironing can be time-consuming, especially when you have several items that need the wrinkles out. Instead, try throwing a couple of ice cubes or a wet washcloth in the dryer with lightweight items that need to be ironed.¹⁰ Set the dryer for 10 minutes and watch how the steam removes the wrinkles.

Slow shower head – Mineral build-up in the shower head can make for an unsatisfying shower. Remove the shower head and soak it in white vinegar and baking soda for 20 to 60 minutes depending on how much buildup you have.¹¹ Rinse it in hot water and replace it.

Pet hair on the furniture – Yes, sticky tape and pet brushes work to remove pet hair, but if you don't want to buy one more thing for the house, try textured rubber gloves

you use to wash the dishes.¹² These will pick up pet hair off your furniture in nothing flat.

Household Maintenance Made Simple

Looking for the light switch in the dark — A dab of glow-in-the-dark paint on the tip of the light switch means you won't be groping in the dark anymore. This is a particularly important safety tip for older adults living alone.

Maintain a clean toilet — Once the toilet has been cleaned, drop in a denture tablet once weekly to prevent scaly rings around the bowl.¹³

Shower and bathroom tile — Never clean your tile with acidic cleaners, like white vinegar. This eats away at the grout sealer and destroys the grout, opening small holes so the backboard gets wet and grows mold. Instead, use a squeegee each time you shower and clean the tile with baking soda and water. In high-traffic areas, grout should be resealed yearly.

Stinky garbage disposal — Bits of rotted food in the disposal can make the whole kitchen stink.¹⁴ Don't put your hand in the disposal! Instead, drop in some orange or lemon peel with the water running at half-speed. Run the disposal for about five seconds and let it sit for 15 to 20 minutes. The citrus will help soften the bits of food.

Next, run a few ice cubes through the disposal with the water running. Next, cover the disposal and fill the sink half-full; then pull the plug and run the disposal.

Slow flushing toilet — Mineral deposits and bacteria may have gotten into the rinse holes under the rim and clogged the water flow.¹⁵ You can see the condition of the jets using a small mirror. If there are light-colored scales, you have mineral deposits; dark orange or black spots are bacteria buildup. The jet holes can be cleaned with a piece of wire or coat hanger and a hand mirror. Be sure to wear glasses and gloves to protect against any backsplash.

Organic fertilizer — Pasta, rice and potato water contain starch that helps feed your garden plants. Dilute it until it's not too cloudy.¹⁶ Used coffee grounds can boost nutrients and build healthy soil. Either add to your compost pile, sprinkle it around your plants or dilute it in water for liquid fertilizer. Coffee grounds can also help deter some unwanted pests.

Vinegar in the garden — Vinegar is an inexpensive way to control weeds when it's mixed with dish detergent and salt.¹⁷ However, this mixture will kill whatever it touches. Spray vinegar around door and window frames to deter ants.¹⁸

No-ladder gutter cleaner — You can make a gutter cleaning wand in 20 minutes¹⁹ using half-inch PVC pipe, two elbows, a cap and a garden hose coupling. Place the garden hose coupling on one end of a long piece of PVC pipe that's long enough to reach the gutter while you're on the ground. Place one 90-degree elbow on the other end and another 6-inch PVC pipe to make an "L" shape.

At the end place another 90-degree elbow and a 6-inch PVC pipe. You now have a "J" shape with a long handle. At the end of the 6-inch pipe place the cap with 3-1/8-inch holes drilled. Affix each joint with glue and let it dry. Hook this up to your garden hose and spray out your gutters.

Upgrade your pots — When you overwater, it can lead to root rot, but holes at the bottom of the pot may allow the soil to dry quickly. Try adding a couple of old sponges to the bottom of the pot to retain moisture, create airspace and act as a water reserve.

Get Organized

Small items — Ice cube trays make perfect storage containers for small items like jewelry, office supplies and tools. You can even find colored silicone trays to match your decor.

Wrapping paper sleeve — Don't tape down the loose edges of wrapping paper.²⁰

Instead, cut an empty toilet paper roll lengthwise and slip it over your wrapping paper. Secure it with tape or a rubber band. The next time you need wrapping paper, you won't waste any paper.

Metal file holders — These are good for more than files or magazines.²¹ Laid on the long vertical side, they make a perfect holder for water bottles. Placed upright, file holders are a perfect way to store your flip flops, sandals and flats. You can also use them to organize your cleaning supplies under your sinks.

Hanging shoe organizer — Looking for a place to store your extra cords and chargers?²² Label each pocket of a hanging shoe organizer with the type of cord or the piece of equipment to which it belongs.

Don't shrink clothes in the dryer — If you have clothes in the wash that shouldn't go into the dryer, try writing on the washing machine lid with a dry-erase marker, noting the clothes that should not go into the dryer.

Storing long-handled garden equipment — It can be difficult to corral all your shovels, rakes and brooms so they don't fall over. Securely anchor a pallet against the wall and slip your long-handled garden supplies in from the top. They will stay organized and upright for easy access.²³

Color code your keys — If you have multiple keys for your home or padlocks, it's easy to get them confused. Use a dab of matching nail polish on the key and padlock that go together or color code the different keys for your home.

Keeping your car clean — Getting into a clean car can feel good, but it's not long before your car can be full of empty wrappers, cups and dead leaves. Quickly make a sturdy and stable in-car garbage can using a plastic cereal container with a lid. Glue a hook and loop fastener (brand name Velcro) to the bottom of the container so it will hook to the car carpet and line it with a small kitchen garbage bag.²⁴

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