PURDUE UNIVERSITY

PURDUE EXTENSION
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HOT NEWS

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HOW TO EASILY REMOVE PESKY FRUIT FLIES FROM YOUR HOME - FOR GOOD

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I thought that might get your attention. While I wish there was an easy, permanent answer to this problem, the reality is that there is not. These tiny flies have been a pest every fall as long as I can remember and I expect that they will continue to appear in kitchens and pantries long after I am gone. These flies are commonly known as 'Fruit flies' or 'Vinegar flies' (*Drosophila melanogaster*). They are especially common during the fall time because they feed and reproduce on ripe fruits and vegetables. Their populations out-of-doors is high and the flies either enter homes through open windows or doors or are actually brought into homes and buildings by people. Fruit fly eggs or larvae are quite common on all produce from gardens or orchards. People unwittingly carry their eggs and larvae into homes on the fruits and vegetables that they bring in. Suddenly, as if overnight, homeowners are bombarded by these pesky little flies and they cannot figure out where they came from.

Fruit flies on rotting watermelon

Fruit flies are known for their small size, red eyes and for their association with the kitchen area. It seems that they can be swatted and squashed and sucked up in a vacuum cleaner every day – and yet they come back the next. This occurs because fruit flies have a life-cycle of about 10 days, so they can appear and repopulate seemingly overnight.

Control is difficult. Pesticides, must be used sparingly and cautiously if at all. Use only products laeled for indoor use and around foods. Most fly traps are ineffective. A comgination of sanitation and exclusion is really the only long-term resolution as this will remove their food source as well as their breeding areas and will prevent re-establishment.

The following list contains steps that if done during late summer and fall, will help resolve most fruit fly issues in homes.

- *Cover fruit bowls or store fresh fruits and vegetables in the refrigerator. (Also remember that, raisins, dates and prunes are favorite attractants. Monitor stored potatoes and onions. If they go bad they attract flies).*
- *Discard all overripe fruit.*
- *Wash all dishes.*
- *Clear the drains and especially the garbage disposal regularly.*
- *Launder the dishrags, or at least wash them thoroughly with soap, rinse them well and wring them dry before hanging them up (don't leave them in the sink).*
- *Store trash in a covered bin.*
- *Seal organic food garbage before placing in receptacle*
- *Close and refrigerate all opened containers of fruit juice, fermented or vinegar products, including ketchup alcohol. Seal or rinse empty bottle before placing in trash.*
- *Wipe up crumbs and spills from your cabinets, counter, and floor.*
- *Take out all trash often -- do not re-use plastic liner garbage bags if they have contained organic wastes.*
- *Clean the refrigerator, especially door seals, the evaporation pan if it has one and check around or behind the refrigerator for spills.*
- *Clean under and around your dishwasher, microwave, and stove.*
- *Dump mop water, clean the pail, launder and thoroughly dry the mop and any associated rags.*
- *Remove damp lint from the laundry room.*
- *Take out compost and keep your collection bin covered. Bury food additions to the pile beneath yard waste.*
- *Use screens on doors and windows well into the fall.*

After completing this list, record what methods seem to work best and save them for next year because fruit flies certainly will be back.