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# Pest-Controlling Your Home

Centipedes, millipedes, pill bugs, roaches, crickets, ants, beetles, spiders, wasps, squirrels, opossums, raccoons, bats, and mice are just some of the pests that manage to find their way into homes. It's very difficult to keep all of them from getting in, but there are several things that you can do to significantly reduce the number of pests that make it inside your home. Most of our recommendations have to do with blocking the ways they can enter. In addition, there are also things you can do outside to make your home less attractive to pest invaders.

## Landscaping

Most pests including rodents and insects like shaded, moist environments. All the plants and shrubs surrounding your home may appeal to you, but they also appeal to numerous pests. It's not that you must cut them down and get rid of them, just move or trim them away from your foundation or log walls. What we recommend is a two-foot clear space between the shrubs and your wall and foundation. Once you move and/or trim them, you need to put some type of cover on the ground to prevent weeds from growing. Do not use pine needles, wood or bark mulch. The function of these types of mulch is to hold moisture and that’s what you don’t want to do. You want to provide a dry environment that bugs and rodents don’t find attractive. The best thing to use is about three to four inches of coarse crushed stone or pebbles. Yes, it’s more expensive than organic mulch, but it’s permanent. Keep debris such as leaves from building up on top of it, and the stone will keep doing its job for many years.

*Crushed stone mulch.*

*Shrubs that need to be moved or trimmed.*

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## Gutters

All log homes should be equipped with gutters. One of the most common problems we see is deterioration of lower log courses due to splash up from rain coming off the roof; however, gutters only work if they are kept clean. Blocked gutters provide ideal moist environments for a wide variety of insects including carpenter ants and termites. Although subterranean termites typically live in soil, they can also establish nests above ground if there is a consistent source of water. These types of termite colonies are known as aerial infestations and if left unattended the termites can cause significant damage over the course of several years.

## Chimney Caps

If you don't already have a cap on your chimney, they are a good investment. It is not uncommon for squirrels, raccoons, and birds to take up residence in a chimney during the summer months and become a nuisance. Raccoons are often infested with fleas that can end up in your living areas.

*Chimney Cap*

Exterior Door Sweep

## Doors Sweeps, Screens and Weather Stripping

Make sure that you have door sweeps installed on all doors accessible to the outside and check to see if they are in good working order. If you can see visible light coming in at the corners they need to be replaced. It only takes a gap of 1/4” for bugs and mice to gain entry. While you are at it check the bottom seal of your garage doors. Once mice get into your garage, they will probably find a way to get into your living area too.

Windows are the most common entry points for flying insects. Flies, ladybugs, boxelder bugs, stink bugs and flying ants are just a few of the insects that can find their way into your home through the windows. Check to see if there are any rips or tears in your window screens and make sure that the screens fit tightly into the frame. See if the weather stripping is still flexible and maintain a tight seal when the window is closed. If you have sliding glass doors, check them too. Weather stripping has a lifespan of about ten to fifteen years so if yours is hard and brittle, it’s time to replace it.

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## Attic and Crawl Space Vents

Normal window screening is not enough to deter determined pests like squirrels. They can gnaw through normal window screening in a matter of a few hours. To prevent entry of bats, rodents, squirrels and raccoons use 1/4” hardware cloth on the outside followed with small mesh screening on the inside to keep out wasps, ladybugs and large ants.

*Hardware cloth over attic vent.*

## Caulks and Sealants

*Properly sealed window trim.*

If you take a walk around your home and count possible insect entry points you may be surprised at how many there are. Besides all the windows and doors, you'll find electrical, telephone, cable, gas, outdoor faucets, air conditioning and plumbing entry points. If you have a crawl space, you may have several vents plus, a door. And don't forget your clothes dryer vent. All of these are common entry points for insects and rodents.

First let’s address windows and doors. Round log or log sided homes present a real challenge when it comes to sealing around windows and doors. All too often, once a window or door is set into place the edges of the openings are covered with a piece of trim and that's it. Rarely is the trim properly sealed to the logs and large voids behind the trim are left empty (see “How to Apply **Energy Seal** and **Woodsman**” for the proper method for sealing around windows and doors). If these voids are not filled, they become perfect nesting sites for several species of ants, many of which will get into your home.

A good product to use for filling these voids is a **Log Gap Cap™**. A **Log Gap Cap** is a pre-cut foam insert that is available in two different sizes that fit most log profiles and log diameters. Once in place the **Log Gap Cap** needs to be covered with a layer of **Energy Seal** or **Woodsman** since direct UV light will degrade the foam rapidly.

Foundation vents also need to be sealed to the walls. Screening the vents won't do any good if open gaps are left between the vent housing and the wall. If there is room for **Backer Rod™** be sure to use it. If the foundation is brick, block or stone, Gray **Energy Seal** provides a good color match to the existing mortar.

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Examine all the electrical and plumbing penetrations mentioned earlier. Most were probably initially sealed with mortar. Most likely you'll find cracks or gaps where the mortar has fallen out over the years. If a cheap construction caulk was used, it's probably hard and brittle. Try to dig out as much as you can and replace it with a high-quality sealant like **Energy Seal** or **Woodsman**. When properly applied they will keep those pesky bugs out of your home for many years to come.

*Foundation Vent*

**Examples of foundation penetrations that need to be inspected.**

## Pesticides

Perma-Chink Systems, Inc. discourages the broadcast use of pesticides to keep nuisance pests out of your home. We are a firm advocate of Integrated Pest Management and since there are so many mechanical methods of control available to homeowners, we believe that they should be used as the primary means of preventing pest invasions. Pesticides should be used only as absolutely needed. Yes, there are situations when the use of pesticides may be the only solution to a problem, but you may be surprised how effective some of these simple mechanical recommendations can be.