Homes & Gardens

Town Tribune Weekly Guide To Fall Living

People Are Spraying Vinegar Around Doors and Windows to Keep Bugs Out: *But Does It Actually Work?*



Cooler temperatures make many of us crave cozy fireplaces, hot cups of tea, and heavy blankets. But we aren't the only ones searching for warmth.

Fall weather often drives pests indoors, and many homeowners opt for eco-friendly pest control methods, like spraying vinegar along windows and door frames.

Why Do People Spray Vinegar Around Doors and Windows to Deter Pests?

Many people assume store-bought or professional pest management solutions are highly toxic, so alternative methods like vinegar can seem more appealing.

"Some people turn to DIY pest control remedies like vinegar because they are looking for a solution that is easier on the environment," Garrett Thrasher, the co-owner and general manager at Thrasher Pest Control, says. "But by the time a client calls us, whatever they've tried on their own has failed."

Home remedies shouldn't be automatically dismissed, says Greg Baumann, a pest management expert and the founding partner of Pest Control Warrior, but one DIY method rarely guarantees results.

Fortunately, many pest control professionals offer services that are both effective and environmentally friendly.

Does Spraying Vinegar Around Windows and Doors Prevent Pests?

Vinegar's effectiveness as a pest control method depends heavily on the pest you're trying to deter.

"A wet vinegar spray applied directly on a soft-bodied insect will usually kill on contact," Thrasher says.

These can include pantry moths, caterpillars, mosquitoes, and more.

The issue, says Baumann, is that vinegar evaporates quickly, making this same method largely unproductive against cockroaches, beetles, spiders, or ants. For this reason, our experts don't recommend vinegar for long-term pest prevention.

"Generally, vinegar can help control some small insects if directly sprayed, but that is not practical," he says. "Pests will happily walk on [wet surfaces] after vinegar evaporates. The homeowner might think it is still on the surface because the odor lingers in the air."

If you want to test a DIY pest control method before calling a pro, Thrasher recommends diatomaceous earth over vinegar.

Should You Use Vinegar as a Pest Control Method?

Although vinegar can affect insects, especially soft-bodied pests, Baumann says peer-reviewed university research has found it has negligible effects on many household insects.1

"[Vinegar] is an ingredient in some low-impact commercially available pesticides, but there are other ingredients in these products that really are more effective," Baumann says. "It is just not the right choice by itself... and will just lead to frustration."

Additionally, spraying vinegar on windows and door frames can damage certain materials because of the solution's high acidity. For instance, it can discolor paint, strip finishes, stain baseboards, and more.

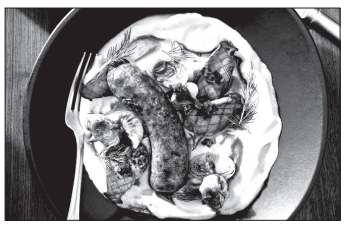
Pro Tips for Fall Pest Prevention:

Instead of vinegar, Baumann and Thrasher encourage homeowners to use proven pest-prevention methods. Here are some of their best tips for fall pest control.

- Caulk windows, weatherstrip doors, and seal gaps under doors with door sweeps. Do the same for attics and crawlspaces.
- Apply an outdoor insecticide around potential entry points to control insects near doors and windows. "Make sure that its label states the location and pest type," Baumann says.
- Once a week, look near doors and windows for signs of pests that might enter the house.
- If you collect acorns or pine cones, Thrasher suggests tossing them in a 150-degree oven for half an hour to kill any insects hiding inside.
- Since rain and cooler temperatures often drive pests indoors, hire a professional to inspect your house for openings and seal them to keep the pests out.

TOWN TRIBUNE'S KITCHEN CORNER

Red Wine–Braised Bratwurst with Apple–Celery Root Puree



Ingredients:

Puree

- 4 cups water
- 2 cups peeled chopped celery root
- 1 small Granny Smith apple, peeled, cored, and chopped (about 1 cup)
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper

Bratwurst

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 pound bratwurst links (about 4 links)
- 10 ounces king oyster mushrooms, cut lengthwise into 1/2-inch-thick planks (about 1 1/2 inches long) (about 2 cups)
- 6 ounces cipollini onions (6 to 8 onions), peeled and halved
- 1 cup (8 ounces) dry red wine
- 1 cup beef stock
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons sliced scallions
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- Dill fronds, for garnish

Directions:

1. Make the puree: Place 4 cups water, celery root, and apple in a medium saucepan; bring to a boil over high. Reduce heat to medium, and cook until tender, 8 to 10 minutes; reserve 1/4 cup cooking liquid. Drain celery root mixture through a fine wire-mesh strainer. Transfer celery root and apple to a blender. Add butter, salt, and pepper; process until smooth, about 2 minutes, adding reserved cooking liquid, 1 tablespoon at a time, as needed for mixture to become silky and smooth. Return puree to saucepan; cover and keep warm.

2. Make the bratwurst: Heat oil in a large skillet over medium. Add bratwurst; cook, turning occasionally, until browned on all sides, 6 to 8 minutes. Transfer bratwurst to a plate. Add mushrooms to skillet; cook, turning occasionally, until golden, 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer mushrooms to plate. Add onions to skillet; cook, turning occasionally, until lightly browned, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer onions to plate with mushrooms.

3. Add wine and stock to skillet; bring to a boil over high, scraping up browned bits from bottom of skillet. Return bratwurst to skillet. Reduce heat to medium-low; cover and simmer until heated through, about 10 minutes. Transfer bratwurst to a plate; let rest for 5 minutes. Increase heat to medium-high; cook wine mixture until liquid is reduced to about 1 cup, 4 to 5 minutes.

4. Return mushrooms and onions to skillet. Reduce heat to medium-low; stir in butter, and cook, stirring constantly, until butter is emulsified, about 1 minute. Stir in scallions, lemon juice, salt, and pepper.

5. Divide puree evenly among 4 plates; top each with 1 bratwurst. Evenly spoon mushrooms, onions, and sauce over and around puree; garnish with dill fronds, and serve.

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