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Controlling Fruit Flies in the Home

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Fruit flies are known by several names. To the biologist and geneticist they are known as *Drosophila* and have probably been more useful in the study and understanding of genetics than any other living organism.

To housewives, restaurant owners, fruit and vegetable producers and canners, they are known as fruit flies, vinegar flies, pomace flies, and probably most commonly as "gnats", a term applied to many small flies.

Fruit flies are always present out-of-doors during warm weather. Continuous generations are produced all summer in various decomposing plant materials, manure, and other situations where rotting organic matter supports the development of yeasts upon which the fly maggots feed.

In the home, female fruit flies are attracted to over-ripe or rotting fruits and vegetables, or to empty cans or bottles in which these products are packaged. Ordinary screening will not keep them out.

One female fly can deposit about 500 eggs. These eggs hatch in little more than a day and the complete life cycle, from egg to adult, takes about 10 to 12 days. With this abundance of eggs and the short life cycle, there is little wonder that several hundred flies seem to emerge from a bowl of fruit overnight.

CONTROL

The easiest method of controlling fruit flies is to eliminate the source of potential infestation. All exposed canned or fresh fruits and vegetables which are not sealed or kept in refrigeration should be consumed or thrown out before fermentation begins. Empty catsup bottles, pickle jars, milk bottles, or garbage-laden drain water are also excellent places for fruit fly development. In restaurants, soured mops and cracks in floors which stay moist are additional breeding places.

Throw away the infested material in instances where the adult flies have already emerged. Destroying the source of infestation will not eliminate all of the fruit flies. Where considerable numbers remain, they may be attracted to simple traps where they will be killed.



A TRAP MADE OF PAINTED FRUIT JAR

TRAPS

One type of trap is made by using black paint or paper to cover the mouth or top one-third of a fruit jar. Spray the inside of the jar with a long residual insecticide such as fenthion (Baytex), diazinon (Spectricide), propoxur (Baygon), or malathion.

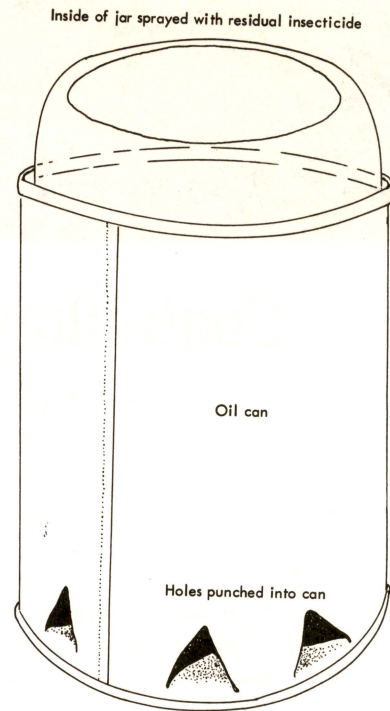
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Invert the jar over a bait such as crushed banana or fig-filled cookies. The jar mouth is rested on two blocks of wood to allow space for the flies to get to the bait. After leaving the bait, they fly up to the light, uncovered portion of the jar and rest on the insecticide-covered bottom or sides.

Another similar trap can be made with a quart oil can and a round quart fruit jar. The oil can must first be thoroughly washed. Then, with a beer can opener, punch several openings in the sides at the bottom of the can.

The inside of the jar is then sprayed with fenthion (Baytex), diazinon (Spectricide), propoxur (Baygon), or malathion. Following the application of the spray, invert the jar, mouth down, inside the can. Dent in the side of the oil can to keep the mouth of the jar about one-half inch from the bottom of the can. Place bait on the bottom of the can under the jar mouth.

Sometimes the oil carrier of commercially prepared household insecticides will act as a repellent. This means that after spraying, the jar will have to dry completely before the fruit flies will be attracted.



A TRAP MADE OF OIL CAN AND FRUIT JAR

USE PESTICIDES WISELY AND SAFELY

Apply only where needed or justified.

Use care when handling, mixing, or applying pesticides.

Keep pesticides in original containers complete with labels.

Keep pesticides out of reach of children.

READ, UNDERSTAND, and FOLLOW directions on the label and heed all precautions.

Carefully and properly dispose of unused portions of diluted sprays and empty pesticide containers.

Do not contaminate food or dishes.