

Flora & Fauna

## Keep Bugs Away the Natural Way

Ants, flies and mosquitoes can ruin summer celebrations. While these little creatures are essential to Earth's ecosystem and are a vital part of the food chain, they certainly are not welcome at picnics, barbeques, and other events. But instead of reaching for harmful chemicals to spray on your body and around your food, consider some eco-friendly ways to keep pests at bay.

### Ants.

The first line of defense is to remove the things that attract ants. So keep counters free of crumbs and sticky spots, cover the sugar, and put the honey jar in a plastic baggie. Cut off water sources such as drips or dishes left soaking overnight. If the ants are invading through a crack in a wall or under a door, wash the area thoroughly with soapy water to remove the hormone trails that guide future ants inside your home. You can also keep a small spray bottle handy, and spray the ants with a bit of soapy water. Many ants have a natural aversion to mint, garlic and cayenne pepper. So sprinkle a bit of cayenne pepper at their point of entry, plug a hole with some garlic, or put a mint teabag in front of your door to keep the ants away.

### Mosquitoes.

Mosquitoes are most active in the early morning and early evening. They seek areas of still air because they are hampered by breezes. Close windows and doors on the side of your house opposite the breeze. The most important measure you can take is to remove standing water sources. Change birdbaths, wading pools and pets' water bowls twice a week. Remove yard items (tires, toys, etc.) that collect water. If you're using the barbeque, throw a bit of sage or rosemary on the coals to repel mosquitoes. An effective natural bug repellent is one part garlic juice mixed with 5 parts water in a small spray bottle. Shake well before using. Spray lightly on exposed body parts for an effective repellent lasting up to 5 - 6 hours. Strips of cotton cloth can also be dipped in this mixture and hung around the patio to act as a localized deterrent.

### Flies.

Flies of all sizes tend to torment most picnics and barbeques. They especially gather in the smelliest areas of your home - like that week-old garbage bag in your garage. Keep flies at bay by putting garbage in a plastic bin with a tight lid. Hang small sachets of crushed mint, bay leaves, cloves, and eucalyptus near open doors and windows to discourage flies from entering. Place a small, open container of sweet basil and clover near pet food or other open food. You can also create your own flytrap with a leftover 2-liter bottle. Simply cut off the top of the bottle (just above the label). Put a little sugar water in the bottom of the bottle. Put the top of the bottle you cut off upside down in the bottom part. It will look like a funnel inside the bottom part. Flies will fly inside the bottle to get the sugar water, but won't be able to find their way out and will eventually die.

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## Cleaning Corner:

### Marks, Spots and Scuffs

Every home has them, those little blue marks from a wet receipt left on the counter, crayon scribbles on the walls, scuff marks on the floorboards. Here a few simple fixes to get rid of these little annoyances.

- **Permanent Marker (or Receipt Ink) on the Counter**  
Simply dip a paper towel into some rubbing alcohol and rub away those unsightly marks!
- **Crayon Marks on the Walls**  
Dip a damp rag into some baking soda and gently rub it against the crayon marks. With a little elbow grease, the marks should come right off.
- **Scuff Marks on Walls and Floors**  
For most surfaces, you can use a product like Mr. Clean Magic Eraser to scrub away those black smudges. For matte paint surfaces or thick rubber marks, try using a regular pencil eraser or even a tennis ball. The surface of the tennis ball will lightly scrub the surface without causing damage.

# July

- 1540 Thomas Cromwell is executed on order from King Henry VIII of England on charges of treason. Henry marries his fifth wife, Catherine Howard, on the very same day
- 1861 The US Congress authorizes paper money
- 1900 The hamburger is created by Louis Lassing of CT
- 1911 Hiram Bingham III re-discovers Machu Picchu "the Lost City of the Incas"
- 1919 First class postage drops from 3¢ to 2¢
- 1928 The first all-talking motion picture debuts in New York
- 1934 First x-ray photo of the entire body human body is preformed in Rochester, NY
- 1958 Alaska becomes the 49th state

## Health Tips: Health Advice: Eat More Whole Fruit

During the summer months, we tend to eat lots of sweet treats like lemonade, iced tea, soda, ice cream, and Fudgsicles®. But all that sweetness (whether from sugar or artificial sweeteners) just isn't good for our health. In fact, even drinking diet soda can increase your risk of becoming obese or developing metabolic syndrome which is characterized by obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes, even coronary disease. So what's a person with a sweet tooth supposed to do? Eat fruit – it's nature's candy!

That old saying, "An apple a day keeps the doctor away," didn't come out of thin air. Eating fruit is incredibly beneficial to your health. Whole fruit contains anti-oxidants and other nutrients that protect you from many diseases, including cancer. Whole fruit also contains fiber which helps you feel fuller longer (preventing you from going on a sugar-spike snacking binge) and it also acts like a Brillo® pad, cleaning your digestive tract to promote regularity.

Here are a few ideas on how you can incorporate more whole fruit into your diet.

- **Cut it.** Sometimes biting into an apple just isn't appealing. Although a big juicy apple is delicious, it's not fun picking the skin from your teeth or constantly holding a napkin to your chin to catch the juice. So, try cutting it into smaller pieces and keeping it in the fridge for a yummy snack when sitting at your desk or watching TV. Toss the apple slices with a bit of lemon juice to keep them from browning.
- **Mix it.** Bored with apples and oranges? Try some exotic fruits like kiwis, pomegranates, mangos, and gooseberries.
- **Dip it.** Kids especially need encouragement to eat fruit. So, give them a little cup of nonfat or low-fat yogurt to accompany some pear slices or a handful of blueberries. Or, add a dollop of unsweetened peanut butter to some apple slices.
- **Add it.** Forget those cereals with freeze dried fruit or sugared raisins (or marshmallows in the shape of fruit). Serve hot oatmeal sprinkled with strawberries or blueberries. The natural sugars in fresh fruit will really jazz up any hot or cold cereal.
- **Freeze it.** Sometimes buying fresh fruit just isn't in the budget, or in the season. So consider buying frozen bags of berries (frozen in their own juice, not corn syrup) to keep on hand for making smoothies or to just pop in your mouth for a cool treat on a hot summer day. Toss a bag of grapes into the freezer to make yummy "grapesicles," a great snack for kids or adults. Here's another tip, if you have bananas that are turning brown, peel them, wrap them in foil, and put them in the freezer for later. They'll keep much longer and taste even sweeter.
- **Grill it.** Many of us will be firing up the grill for steaks, burgers, and hot dogs. Consider adding some grilled fruit to the menu. They make a quick, easy and delicious side dish or appetizer. Firm fruits like apples, pears and pineapple will hold their shape well on the grill. Softer fruits like peaches, plums and mangos will get mushy if cooked too long, so keep an eye on them. Grilling fruit caramelizes their natural sugars and really enhances their flavor.

## Kid Corner: Fun Ways to Celebrate Independence Day

Most children learn about American history in school. But just because it's summer, it's doesn't mean that learning should stop! Here are some patriotic summer activities that you and your kids can do to have fun and learn about American history.

- **Break Out the Sidewalk Chalk.** One of the fun parts of summer is getting to draw on the sidewalk and driveway with chalk. Instead of scribbling random images, tell your kids to draw patriotic images such as the American flag, fireworks, or the bald eagle.
- **Bake a Cake.** Grab a box of cake mix from the store, some white frosting, strawberries, and blueberries. Bake a cake in a rectangular cake pan then cover it with white frosting when it cools. Then have your kids help arrange the blueberries and strawberries on the cake to make it look like the American flag. As you're working, talk about what the stars and stripes represent, and talk about ways they can show respect to the flag.
- **Sing a Song.** Kids love to sing. So try teaching them some simple patriotic songs like, "Grand Old Flag," "America the Beautiful," "America," or "The Star Spangled Banner."
- **Watch a Retiring Ceremony of the American Flag.** When the United States flag becomes worn, torn, faded or badly soiled, it is time to replace it with a new flag, and the old flag should be "retired" or destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning. You can contact the local American Legion or VFW and arrange for your kids to visit on an occasion when they'll be properly retiring the American flag.
- **Visit a Parade.** Most cities and towns hold local parades, which typically involve members of the armed forces, police, and fire department. For many children, it is the first time they ever see these individuals in uniform up close. Be sure to tell them how to properly salute the American flag to show respect. Stand up, take off your hat, and put your right hand over your heart (holding your hat over your left shoulder). Remain standing and still until the flag passes.
- **Go See a Fireworks Display.** Check out your local paper or call your village hall to find out when and where the nearest fireworks display will be held. Bring a few blankets, fold-out chairs, and some bug repellent.
- **Create a Quiz.** Create a fun quiz to help your kids learn about the American flag and the history of our Independence Day. Ask questions such as, "Name 5 places where the American flag is flown 24 hours a day," or "Who was king of England when America signed the Declaration of Independence?" (See the mini quiz on the next page for some ideas.) Allow your children to use the Internet or visit a library to answer the questions. When they find all the correct answers, take them out for pizza or ice cream as a reward!

## Apple Pie Shake

In a blender, add 1/2 a cup of apple juice and 3 scoops of vanilla ice cream or frozen yogurt. Blend until well mixed. Stir in 1/2 a teaspoon of ground cinnamon and serve!

## Melon Freeze

In a blender, add the following ingredients in the order given: 1 cup of cut-up melon, 1 8-oz can of crushed pineapple, 10 frozen strawberries, 1 cup of orange juice, and 7 ice cubes. Blend on high speed until smooth and icy.

## Old-Fashioned Lemonade

Fill a blender with ice cubes. Turn on high speed and crush. Drain off excess water. Dump the crushed ice into a tall container. Fill to the top with cold water. Squeeze the juice from one lemon over the ice and sprinkle with 1 tablespoon of sugar or a low-calorie sweetener. Place a lid on the container and shake vigorously for one full minute.

## Creamy Citrus Smoothie

In a blender, combine 1 6-oz can of frozen orange juice concentrate, 1 cup of water, 1 cup of milk, 1/4 cup of sugar, 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract, and 10 ice cubes. Blend on high until smooth.

Serves 1-2

## Mini American History Quiz

**Q: When and where was the first Independence Day celebrated, and what year did it become a national holiday?**

A: Philadelphia, July 8, 1776; 1941

**Q: Who was it who shouted, "The British are coming!" as he rode his horse through Concord, MA?**

A: Paul Revere

**Q: What is the inscription on the Liberty Bell?**

A: "Proclaim Liberty Throughout All the Land Unto All the Inhabitants Thereof."

## Planning the Family Reunion

For years, someone in your family always taken care of the family reunion. Perhaps you could always count on Aunt Agatha or Grandpa Joe to put things together. It always seemed so easy, and so much fun. But now, they are no longer able to shoulder the responsibility, and everyone in your family is looking to you to carry the torch... Don't panic! With a little bit of planning, you can put together a terrific family reunion, even for the biggest extended family.

1. **Get a committee.** If you have a small family (25 or less), you can have a committee of one person (you) to handle all the details. If you have a larger family, recruit your sister, uncle or cousin to help out. Make a list of tasks to be done and divide it between committee members.
2. **Decide on the type of reunion.** The simplest and cheapest reunions are summer barbecues and picnics. If your family enjoys camping, consider an overnight affair at a local forest preserve or campground. Pool parties are great ways to get the family together – but only if you have a pool big enough! If your family can spare the expense, make reservations at a banquet room in a restaurant.
3. **Pick a date.** Be sure to give your family members at least 3-6 weeks notice so they can plan accordingly. If reunion is an annual event, tell your relatives to always mark off the third Saturday in June, for example.
4. **Make your guest list.** This is where a committee really comes in handy. They can remind you about relatives you may have forgotten about, or didn't even know you had! "Don't forget about Selma, she's our third-cousin twice removed." A committee is also great to help you track down contact information like addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses.
5. **Create a budget.** Figure out how much everything will cost (postage for invitations, plates, cups, napkins, etc.) and divide it amongst your committee, or your entire family. Most people won't mind bringing a couple dollars to chip in. Potluck meals are very budget-friendly, too.
6. **Plan some games.** Games help break the ice and get folks (who may not have seen each other in a year or longer) to interact in a fun way. Volleyball, beanbag toss, or horseshoes are great outdoor games. Squirt guns and water balloons are fun for kids, too.
7. **Have fun!** Remember, this is a time for you to reconnect with family. So don't spend the day slaving in the kitchen. Work out the details and ask for help with responsibilities so you can be out socializing, too!

## ... Carpet Talk...

### Control Carpet Odors

Carpet is a wonderful addition to the comfort and appearance of your home, but if not cared for properly, it can attract dirt and odor like a magnet. Here are some things you can do at home to keep odor under control.

**Mold/Mildew Odors.** If you notice a musty smell from your carpet, you might have a mold or mildew problem. This is especially the case if your carpet is in a humid environment or was wet for an extended period. The best course of action is to call your professional carpet cleaner. He or she will have the proper chemicals to treat the problem, or will be able to advise you if it is necessary to replace the carpet for your family's health and safety.

**Smoke Odors.** First, if someone is smoking inside the house, encourage him or her to smoke outside. You cannot keep your carpet deodorized if someone keeps blowing smoke in your home. For occasional smoke odor, shake a bit of baking soda onto the carpet. With a corn straw broom, brush the baking soda into the nap of the carpeting to make sure it gets into the fibers. Leave it overnight. In the morning, give the carpet a thorough vacuuming, going over it several times to pick up as much of the baking soda as possible.

**Pet Odors.** Part of being a pet owner is cleaning up occasional vomit or urine stains on the carpet. Sometimes, however, we can't get to these little accidents fast enough and big odor problems result. You can use the baking soda method described above to remove some of the odor. If it persists, contact your carpet care professional.



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**Inside this issue you'll find:**

- Keep Bugs Away the Natural Way
- Cleaning Corner: Marks, Spots, and Scuffs
- Health Advice: Eat More Whole Fruit
- Kid Corner: Fun Ways to Celebrate Independence Day
- Recipe: Summer Drinks in the Blender
- Planning the Family Reunion
- Carpet Talk: Control Carpet Odors
- July Money-Saving Special

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