

Oh, those pesky pests...

As the weather warms and our yards begin to bloom, it seems like everyone wants to get outside and enjoy the beautiful outdoors here in the Treasure Valley. We're definitely looking forward to backyard barbecues with friends and family—but let's talk about the *uninvited* guests that tend to show up this time of year.

I recently chatted with Mike Gray from Apex Pest Control about some of the common pest problems we see in spring and summer, and what we can do about them.

Ticks

One of the most concerning pests right now are ticks. While Lyme disease-carrying deer ticks are not found in Idaho, American Dog Ticks and Rocky Mountain Wood Ticks are common. Most of us think of ticks while hiking, but they can also be found right in our own backyards. DIY sprays can help, but they tend to break down quickly—so professional treatments are often more effective. If you're looking for a natural approach, consider planting tick-repellent herbs like lavender, oregano, sage, rosemary, and thyme (apologies to Simon & Garfunkel). These can be a great way to complement other treatments.

Voles and Garden Pests

Voles are another unwelcome guest. These burrowing rodents love to feast on the roots of shrubs and vegetable plants. Baiting and trapping are the go-to strategies for getting rid of them.

Other common yard and garden pests include aphids, slugs, squash bugs, and fruit flies:

- **Aphids** often target roses and trees like maple and birch. They can be managed with dormant oil sprays in early budding stages or systemic insecticides—either as sprays or soil treatments.
- **Squash bugs**, as the name suggests, love crops like zucchini. You can deter them by planting marigolds, catnip, or nasturtiums, or by using food-grade Diatomaceous Earth (DE). DE is safe for people and pets but deadly to bugs, as it dehydrates them by piercing their exoskeletons.
- **Fruit flies**, like the Western Cherry Fruit Fly, can infest entire trees. Combat them with sticky traps and organic insecticides like Spinosad. Be sure to remove fallen or leftover fruit to reduce breeding grounds.

Birds

Birds might not be the first pest you think of, but during nesting season, they can become a problem. Mike recently got a call to remove what was assumed to be a pigeon nest from an attic—only to discover it belonged to a falcon! (Picture an angry mama bird dive-bombing from the sky while you're 20 feet up a ladder—no thanks.) To avoid this, cover attic vents with slats or screens to keep birds from setting up camp in your home.

Ants and Spiders

Moving inside the home, ants and spiders are the most common pests we see.

- **Ants:** The two most common species in our area are Odorous House Ants (OHA), found indoors, and Pavement Ants (PA), typically found outdoors. OHAs enter homes looking for sweets and proteins, nesting in warm, dark places like under sinks or inside walls. Keeping food sealed and cleaning up spills will help keep them at bay.
PAs often show up through patio cracks or along foundations. They can be tough to eliminate because their nests are large and often have multiple queens. RAID and other chemical sprays can work but be cautious with residues, especially around pets and kids. DE is a safer, natural alternative that works well against ants too.

- **Spiders:** While creepy to some, spiders are actually helpful in controlling other bugs. The most common types around here are wolf spiders and web-weavers.
 - *Wolf spiders* don't build webs—they actively hunt at night and feed on insects like ants and earwigs.
 - *Weaver spiders* spin webs to catch flying insects like mosquitoes and moths.
 - Although medically significant spiders like the Black Widow , Hobo and Yellow Sack do exist, they're rare and typically found in wood piles or other undisturbed areas.

To minimize spiders indoors, keep up with regular vacuuming and dusting, and seal any cracks or gaps where bugs might enter.

We hope these tips help you maintain a pest free home. If you have questions about any aspect of home maintenance and repair, feel free to reach out—we're both happy to help!

Arden "Chip" Anderson is the owner of the Anderson Property Group, Inc., a property inspection and consulting firm in Star.

986-226-5355

arden@theandersonpropertygroup.com

www.theandersonpropertygroup.com

Mike Gray is the owner of Apex Pest Control, a full service pest control company located in Star.

208-616-0305

apexpestidaho@gmail.com

www.apexpestidaho.com