

# Spring Greening Your Establishment with IPM

by Patrick T. Copps, MS, BCE

It's impossible to ignore the environmental movement that has swept the nation in recent years, and now it's safe to say that "going Green" is more than just a passing trend. In response to their heightened environmental awareness, millions of Americans have become more conscious consumers. For example, many shoppers now opt for "Greener" products, using cloth in place of plastic grocery bags and recycling paper, glass, and plastic items more than ever before. But, in addition to changing their own habits, today's consumers expect businesses to follow suit.

Americans are increasingly selective about the businesses they frequent, choosing companies that demonstrate their corporate social responsibility by developing more environmentally-friendly business practices. As a result, many business sectors, including the housekeeping industry, are taking significant steps to become environmental stewards.

Whether you manage housekeeping operations for a hotel establishment, healthcare facility, or other commercial property, your first priority is maintaining a clean and healthy atmosphere for your staff, guests, patients, and tenants. Perhaps you already implement Green cleaning and maintenance methods, but you may not have considered the role your pest management program can play in these efforts.

Thanks to new technologies, housekeeping managers can now execute more environmentally-friendly pest management methods to keep pests off their properties while reducing risk to the environment and human health. Unlike traditional methods, these pest management techniques help

identify, prevent, and control pest infestations by understanding their root causes and the behaviors of target pests.

## Integrated Pest Management Programs

As an environmentally-friendly approach to pest management, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) programs emphasize proactive solutions, such as sanitation and facility maintenance, to manage pest problems. In contrast to traditional pest control, IPM is an ongoing cycle of inspection, prevention, and monitoring that uses chemical treatments as a last resort.

When employed as part of an IPM program, Green pest man-



*Pest management professionals can apply gels inside cracks and crevices to help intercept pests before they can enter your facility.*

agement techniques are highly effective in keeping pests—and the disease-causing organisms they can carry—away from your property.

If you aren't already following IPM guidelines at your facility, contact your pest management provider to discuss how you can start an IPM program and initiate Green pest management techniques. Read on for specific tips that will enhance your IPM

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program and help reduce pest sightings at your property.

## Fly Lights

Hotels, healthcare facilities, multi-family housing establishments, and other types of properties attract pests due to their abundance of food, water, shelter, and warm temperatures necessary for pest survival. In particular, the foodservice and waste management areas within your facility can attract flies, which can carry dangerous pathogens, such as *E. coli*, *Salmonella*, and *Shigella*. Along with proper trash handling procedures, you can combat a small fly problem before it becomes a full-fledged infestation by installing fly lights inside near exterior entrances around your facility.

Consider using fly lights near entrances to food preparation rooms, waste disposal zones, shipping/receiving areas, and employee break rooms to intercept flying insects before they make their way inside your building. Fly lights incorporate ultraviolet light to lure pests to non-toxic sticky boards placed inside a confined trap unit.

Remember to replace the sticky boards on a regular basis and change the ultraviolet light bulbs at least once per year. Not only will fly lights trap flies and other flying insects before they reach more sensitive areas of your establishment, but the devices also can serve as a good pest monitoring tool.

## Sticky Boards

Many pest management professionals recommend sticky boards because they can help efficiently and effectively trap and monitor for crawling pests, especially cockroaches. Place sticky boards in pest "hot spots," or those areas likely to attract pests. Your certified pest management professional can help you identify the pest hot

spots most common to a property like yours and then install the sticky boards in places where they won't interfere with everyday activity—usually underneath or behind equipment and shelves in storage areas, foodservice areas, and employee break areas.

Similar to fly lights, sticky boards can help you effectively

monitor for pest activity so that you can modify your IPM program as needed. During regularly scheduled appointments, your pest management professional will document the number and types of pests found at each sticky board location to determine the significance and degree of pest

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activity in the area. As an added benefit, sticky boards may capture enough pests to help control small populations.

## Organic Cleaners

Shifting focus to pest prevention, organic cleaners that consist of naturally occurring bacteria and enzymes can eliminate grime buildup, residual food debris, and mildew that serve as breeding grounds for many flying and crawling pest species. Kitchen and laundry drains, sinks, and waste disposal areas are popular pest “hot spots” where you can put organic cleaners to the test.

Unlike your regular cleaning products, Green cleaners offer an environmentally-friendly alternative to chemical sanitizers.

## Pheromones and Insect Growth Regulators

Outsmarting a pest with its own biology is a sure-fire way to keep these unwanted visitors out of the kitchen and other sensitive areas on your property. As an alternative to traditional pesticides, pest management professionals can now control pests by using their biology against them with synthetic copies of hormones involved in pest reproduction and growth. Two of the most common techniques are pheromone monitors and insect growth regulators (IGRs).

Pests release chemical messages, called pheromones, to communicate with other pests of the same species. Pheromone monitors use synthetic versions of the insect pheromones to lure them to a sticky board and offer an easy way to track flying insect populations, particularly stored-product pests, such as beetles, moths, and weevils.

Similar to pheromone monitors, IGRs, or lab-created replications of insect hormones, prevent pests from reaching full maturity by

disrupting the insect growth cycle. This eliminates their reproduction abilities and helps stop a pest infestation.

## Non-Volatile Insect Baits

Unlike conventional chemical sprays, environmentally-friendly, non-volatile baits use chemical formulations that do not become airborne and can be applied in two forms—gels and bait pucks. Pest management professionals apply gels inside cracks and crevices to help intercept pests before they can enter your facility. Pucks, which contain the bait inside a protective casing, can effectively control cockroach activity in foodservice areas.

Don't forget that these baits allow for targeted and contained treatment applications, so you don't have to worry about them disrupting regular activity around your property.

## Repellents and Desiccants

Repellent dust can keep pests from hiding and breeding in those hard-to-reach cracks and crevices throughout your facility. Insects are repelled upon contact with the repellent, which contains compounds extracted from pyrethrum flowers, called pyrethrins, and silica gel, an inorganic compound that damages insects' exoskeletons through a process called desiccation. Applications of repellents in cracks and crevices at the base of exterior walls, followed by the use of a sealant, will eliminate popular pest hot spots and help prevent future infestations.

## Green Pest Management Staff Training

Now that you have a better knowledge of several Green pest management tools available to enhance your IPM program, it's important to also remember that a pest management professional



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depends on the help of your housekeeping staff to achieve maximum success. After all, the effectiveness of your IPM program hinges on continuous prevention and maintenance practices—even when your professional is not on site.

To obtain buy-in from your housekeeping staff on these environmentally-friendly pest management practices, ask your pest management provider if they offer training classes. They can educate your staff on the importance of Green pest management and how to correctly identify, prevent, and monitor pest infestations.

Right behind keeping the establishment clean and welcoming, your staff has an important duty to alert you to potential pest problems. Let employees know you rely on them to report any pest sightings, conditions conducive to an infestation, and maintenance concerns so you can tackle any pest issues before they become larger problems.

With a rigorous IPM program and the cooperation of your housekeeping staff, you will be on your way to becoming a more responsible business that helps keep consumers satisfied and willing to return to your property. ♦

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