

ARE YOU GETTING *your greens?*

By Patrick T. Copps

Integrating green pest management into your overall food safety program

In addition to scrutinizing the ingredients on the menu, diners are more aware than ever of the environment in which those ingredients were grown, stored, transported and prepared. But customers aren't the only ones interested. Increasingly stringent food safety regulations mean that a clean, low-chemical environment is essential to maintaining compliance, health inspection scores, dining reviews and your restaurant's reputation.

An Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach scores high with inspectors, customers and the environment. IPM focuses on preventive measures to reduce pest presence and uses targeted chemical applications only as a last resort. Taking proactive measures to prevent pests' access to essential needs – food, water and shelter – ensures a positive dining experience for everyone except the pests.

Here are a few ways to add helpings of “green” to your pest management program.

sanitation salad

One of the key ingredients of a green program is stringent sanitation. All restaurants have a sanitation program in place, but reviewing your protocols with your pest management provider can lead to improvements that reinforce food safety and reduce pest pressure. Toss these tips into the mix:

- Make sure to immediately clean up spills, because very small amounts of moisture or food debris can sustain pests.
- Line and seal trash receptacles and remove waste daily to prevent pests from dining on leftovers.
- Scrub drains with a brush and an organic, or “green,” cleaning solution containing naturally occurring bacteria and enzymes to eliminate the grease and grime on which pests feed.

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garnish

There's more than one way to add that final pop of color to a plate. And there's more than one way to address pest presence in your establishment while keeping it green.

- **INSECT BAITES.** Available as gels or bait pucks, insect baits contain low doses of chemical compounds that do not become airborne. Non-volatile baits provide targeted treatment applications that reduce the need for residual sprays.

- **PHEROMONE MONITORS.** These traps are most often used to collect and monitor stored-product pests, such as Indian Meal Moths, and utilize synthetic versions of insect pheromones to attract pests to a sticky board.

- **INSECT GROWTH REGULATORS (IGR).** IGRs use synthetic pest hormones to prevent pests from reaching maturity, thereby preventing subsequent pest activity.

- **FLY LIGHTS.** Ultraviolet lights attract flying pests to a non-toxic sticky board. Install fly lights near entrances to food preparation and waste disposal areas. Ask your pest management professional to monitor sticky boards for pest activity. The type and amount of flying insects on a sticky board can help determine the extent of a pest problem and help prevent an infestation from getting out of hand.



A green treatment alternative, non-volatile baits provide targeted treatment applications that reduce the need for residual sprays.

(out)side dish

"Waiter, there's a fly in my soup!" Before you hear those words take time to implement some exterior maintenance practices that will keep pests in the great outdoors and out of your hors d'oeuvres.

- **LIGHTING.** Mercury vapor lights attract flying insects and other pests. Install these lights at a distance from your building, such as in the parking lot, to draw pests away from your establishment. Use sodium vapor lights, which are less appealing to pests, near building entrances.



Properly line and tightly seal all trash receptacles to prevent odors from escaping and attracting pests.

- **AIR FLOW.** Establish a positive air flow to push pests out of your building. To check air flow, hold a small strip of paper under the doorway. If the paper blows away from your building, the air flow is positive. Work with an HVAC professional to make any necessary changes.

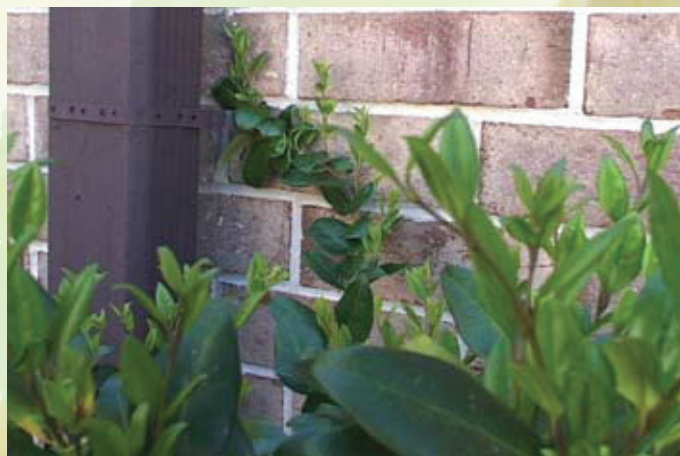
- **REPELLANTS.** Force pests to retreat with a combination of pyrethrins (compounds extracted from chrysanthemum flowers) and silica gel (an inorganic compound that dries out insects' exoskeletons). Work with your pest management provider to identify small cracks and crevices in your building's exterior to apply repellent. After treatment, seal the openings with caulk to help reduce the chance of future infestations.

- **LANDSCAPING.** Install a 30-inch gravel strip around the immediate perimeter of the establishment to prevent pests from entering the building. Rodents avoid open areas, and smaller pests will be discouraged from crossing the rocky terrain. Maintain the landscaping and trim vegetation near the building to eliminate hiding places and help prevent pest access.

These tips can help you manage the environment at your establishment. Remember, however, that pests can arrive in shipments, so work with your pest management provider and other appropriate contacts to ensure that pests don't ride in on incoming ingredients. Proper inspection and storage upon arrival can reduce the possibility of introducing pests to the menu.

A strong partnership with your pest management provider is the most important ingredient in a green pest management strategy. Continuously assess and monitor the program you've put in place until it's well seasoned.

Patrick Copps is technical services manager for Orkin's Pacific Division. A board-certified entomologist in urban and industrial entomology, Mr. Copps has more than 35 years experience in the industry. For more information, email Mr. Copps at pcopps@rollins.com or visit www.orkincommercial.com.



Outside landscaping may not only appeal to customers, but pests too – cut back shrubbery touching your building to eliminate pest hiding spots.

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