

Bugs and Pests: Seasonal Friends?

Japan. A country with a seemingly endless amount of culture, food, and places to explore. Breathe it in, experience everything to the fullest, but remember all good things come at a price. And for you lucky ALTs that price more often than not will be the scores of pests you will come across at one point or another.

This section of the book will focus more specifically on the types of insects you will come across and how to prevent and prepare your home for the “invasion”. If it is already too late and all seems lost, do not fear! For at the very end of this section I have provided a list of recommended types of pesticides (and all natural home-made remedies for those environmentally conscious ALTs) that every ALT arsenal should have.

The Enemy:

Suzumebachi /スズメバチ
Japanese Giant Hornet



These little guys are not good friends to make. They can get anywhere between **2-4 inches long**. They are extremely poisonous, and are **potentially fatal** if you get stung.

Mukade /ムカデ
Japanese Giant Centipede



Far more common, but still just as dangerous. This guy can grow up to be **20cm long**. If bitten, though not deadly, can be **very painful** and in some cases can lead to extreme abdominal discomfort.

Ashidaka-gumo/足高蜘蛛
Huntsman Spider



A soft and cuddly puppy compared to the mukade. A soft and cuddly puppy that can get up to **10-12 in. long**. The bite, though nasty, is mostly **non-venomous**. Unless defending a nest this happy fella is more inclined to escape you than attack you.

Gokiburi /ゴキブリ
Cockroaches



One of the most common pests found around the prefecture. They are supposedly the **favorite food of spiders and mukade**, so keeping your home cockroach-free can be a method of larger pest control. **Locations: Everywhere. Seriously.**

Dani /ダニ
Tatami Mites



These guys are usually found in **tatami mats**. Their bites are small, red, and itchy and always come in pairs since the *dani* bite twice in a row. Most people get these bites on **skin exposed** while sleeping.

Ari /アリ
Ants



Not to worry! These little guys are **not poisonous**. But they are everywhere! Regardless of the season, if you have anything that **smells remotely sweet**, these ants will come running. Regular cleaning is one of the most sure-fire ways to prevent them.

Prevention:

There are hundreds of other types of bugs that you may encounter but these reliable prevention methods should keep the other pesky critters out as well.

1. **CLEAN:** First and most obvious, regularly clean your house. This doesn't mean that if I can see the floor it's clean. Make sure to sweep and mop the floors. All food should be stored properly and off counters. Also be sure to clean all of your sinks, throwing all traces of food out.
2. **DRAINS:** This may seem silly but even if you keep up with your cleaning regime your sinks and bathtub are some of the dirtiest places in your house. Dirt, food, dead skin cells build up in the drains and attract the worst kind of attention. To properly clean these, do a mixture of bleach and water (2 cups water for every cup of bleach – Japanese bleach is weaker than bleach in America). Mix well and pour down your drains, but please take caution since skin contact with strong amounts of bleach can cause chemical burns.
3. **SCREENS:** Check all of your windows and doorways and check to see if you have screens. If you do make sure that there are no holes or tears in the netting. If there are, MacGyver it and tape it up!
4. **INSULATION:** Japanese houses/apartments are usually very poorly insulated. Often times your windows and doorways will have gaps in them directly outside. You can go the cheap route and just tape the gaps up, but for the long term and to save you a bit of money when using your air-conditioner, go to any of your NAFCO, KOMERI, or other hardware stores and pick yourself up some putty and just fill in the gaps.
5. ***POWDER:** My personal favorite! This powder, 虫コロリ or *Mushi-Korori*, is meant to be used outside and all around the perimeter of your house. This stuff acts as a shield and keeps most of the bigger bugs and almost all of the little ones from getting in your house. Except cockroaches. Those buggers could make it through the apocalypse.

OH NO! THEY'RE INSIDE!

Okay, so plan B prevention didn't work. That sucks but all hope is not lost. Here are a few dependable bug killers that can and should help you get rid of them.



#1 is the *Mushi-Korori* powder that you use around your house.

#2 & #3 are bee killers, the second one specifically for the Giant hornets (*Hachi-Abu & Suzumebach Ultra Jet*).

#4 is the wonderful mukade killer called *Mukade-Korori*.

#5 is a specific kind of bug killer that freezes the cockroaches to death. (*Gokiburi kō tome jetto*).

#6 is the tatami bomb to kill the tatami mites. (*Dani-Asu*).

#7 & #8 are general bug killers for your day to day pest problems. (*Mushi-Korori-Asu & Kichoru*).

Natural Bug Killer: For those who want to be kind to the environment but don't want the pests here is a recipe for a home-made bug killer.

1 garlic bulb 1 small onion 1 t. powdered cayenne pepper 1 qt. water 1 TBLS liquid dish soap
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-Chop garlic and onion in blender. -Add the cayenne pepper and water, Steep one 1 hour. -Strain through cheesecloth -Add liquid dish soap so the spray sticks to plants leaves. - Mix well. Spray both sides of leaves. Store leftover mixture in the fridge.
