

Managing home and garden pests

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The merits of the Sunshine Coast — including mild winters, great growing conditions and abundant sun and moisture — make it an ideal place to live and garden. Unfortunately, people aren't the only creatures to think so. The Sunshine Coast also attracts its fair share of home and garden pests, including snails, slugs, rats, mice, cockroaches and bedbugs!

And if you think you can just ignore them, think again. Besides being annoying, common household pests can be a health hazard and can do serious damage to your home if not attended to. Thankfully, these days, pest control doesn't have to mean automatically reaching for toxic poisons or harsh controls. You can take a greener approach by consulting experts with more enlightened tactics.

A local company, Inno-



Some pests, like snails, are easy to control with green methods, others less so.

vative Pest Control, prides itself on keeping up with the most progressive ways to manage pests. They use state-of-the-art equipment such as thermal imaging (infrared) to locate infestations and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) to prevent and

tackle pest infestations. They also use their website and in-house digital video and photography to help educate, by sharing pest tips with clients and the public.

"We focus on prevention and maintenance, rather than just eliminating infes-

tations," said Shawn Kendel from Innovative Pest Control. "Whenever possible, we try to treat the disease, not just the symptoms"

Although Innovative deals with all kinds of pests, in both commercial and
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Male and female carpenter ants.

residential settings, the most common serious vermin on the Coast are rodents — rats and mice — as well as ants and termites. Less common but equally creepy pests are fleas, cockroaches and bedbugs. Kendel contends that most pests can be controlled using green or greener pest control but warns that it takes significantly more patience, a bit of elbow grease and more commitment by the home or building owner or residents.

Green pest control can range from completely chemical-free tactics to the use of reduced toxicity materials such as borates. The team works with clients to tailor a program based on their beliefs, individual situation and needs.

"Some pests such as termites and carpenter ants are challenging to control using green methods, but it can be

done with the right efforts," he said. "Often, the use of some pesticide is required initially, especially in a situation where there is a very well established termite or carpenter ant colony within a structure and there is extensive damage or a large number of insects within a home or building."

Rodents are relatively easy to control by green methods, Kendel said, but bedbugs, like ants, are not. Regardless, the team commits to striving to solve any pest problem in the least toxic way, with the lowest impact on non-target species and the environment.

Ignoring your pest problem will not make it go away. It will only make it worse. Kendel cites the example of carpenter ants, a colony of which will double (at least) every spring.

On average a hom-

owner will see only three to five per cent of them, so over time, hundreds of thousands of individual ants can take up residence in your walls, attics and crawlspaces. Not only do they cause damage, they will contaminate food and become unwieldy to manage due to the sheer magnitude of their numbers.

Overall, building owners need to be more vigilant. A proactive approach to proper pest maintenance is the best way to deal with the inevitable freeloaders that try to move into Sunshine Coast abodes.

"Having an inspection performed periodically or at the first sign of pest problem will limit damage, save money and reduce the amount of pesticides that may be required to bring it under control," Kendel adds.