

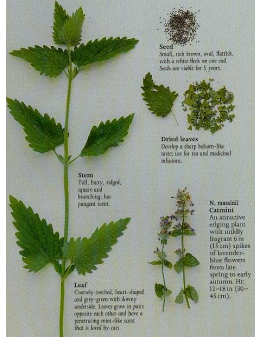
A horizontal row of 12 identical cartoon mosquitoes. Each mosquito has a green body, a light blue head with large eyes, and translucent wings with pink veins. They are all facing left.

So your supply of “OFF” ran out, and you’re being bugged? Just make your own insect repellent.

The problem with storing survival supplies is that your consumable items will eventually get used up (or get old). Making your own stuff is one solution, if you know how, and you can also use the products you produce as trade goods. Fortunately for us survival-minded types, there is a common plant which contains an oil that is TEN TIMES more effective as an insect repellant than DEET, the active ingredient in most commercial brands. Don't laugh, but that plant is Catnip. It also makes a good tea when dried properly (in the shade), is a good source of vitamin C, has beneficial medicinal properties, and will even attract bees to your primitive beehives.



Close-up of Catnip Plant.



Catnip botanical information.



Healthy mature catnip plants.

Catnip is sold (along with most other herbs) at Walmarts, pharmacies, and nurseries everywhere, so it is easy to obtain and start growing. The only real trick is to know that cats will destroy your young catnip plants, while they are prowling around at night (if they can reach them), so your starter plants must be protected in cages, or in greenhouses, or indoors. After you have grown a good supply of the plant, you could pick some leaves, crush them up to release the oils, and rub them on your skin to get the repellant effect, but it is easy to produce an insect repellant lotion, using a simple oleoresin (oil-based) extraction process. Basically, you will harvest fresh catnip, grind or chop it up, and put it in a container of light oil, such as baby oil. The active oils from the plant are allowed to mix with the baby oil, then the leaf bits are strained out, and you have insect repellant. This works best when the oil is heated, but not to boiling, as this destroys the delicate catnip oil. (Likewise, don't boil dried catnip leaves for tea, just steep them in hot water, and don't even dry them in the sun; dry in a shady location, because direct sunlight will also destroy the oils in the drying leaves.)

You can crush catnip by hand, or chop it up with a knife, or run it through a baby food grinder, blender or meat grinder .



Baby oil.



Baby food grinder.



Meat grinder.



Steel mortar & pestle.

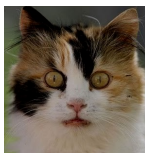
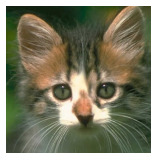
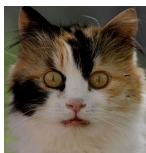


Stone metate.



Stone mortar & pestle.

Lacking these, you can use a metate, or mortar and pestle, tools you can make yourself out of stone or wood. If you don't have baby oil, any other light oil will do, such as olive oil, nut oils, or even oil rendered from animal fats. People used to make their own oils from whatever suitable plants grew in their areas, and you still can, if you need to. The main oil-producing plants have always been olives, nuts, and coconuts, and there used to be whole industries based on extracting oil from animals such as whales and seals. Basically, the nuts are crushed, or animal fat is cubed, and boiled in a pot of water, then oil is skimmed off the top. You can even extract oil from a mouse carcass this way, and who wouldn't like to smear themselves with rat fat? But seriously, try this and you will see that it works.



No more mosquitoes, but now cats follow us everywhere!