

**insect answers**



**DOORYARD PESTS**

Dooryard pests normally live outside but enter houses and other buildings by accident or for winter shelter. Most will cause no damage to a house or its contents, with the possible exception of damage to house plants. However, these pests are nuisances to the homeowner.

**Centipedes**

Centipedes are fast-moving, variously colored, worm-shaped, insect-like creatures which inhabit soil and organic debris. They are about 3 cm (1.18 in) or longer and have many legs (one set per body region).

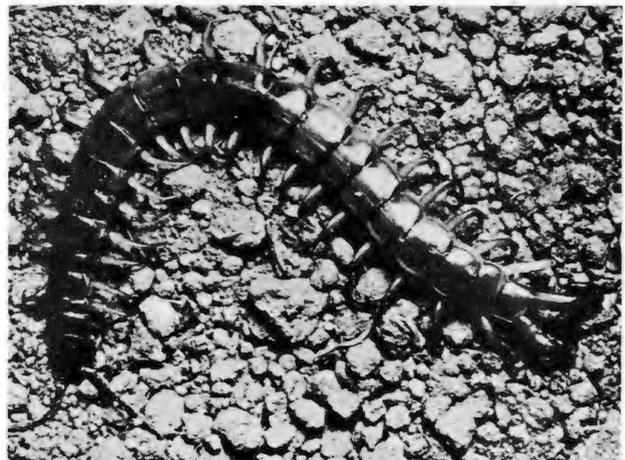
Centipedes feed on insects and similar creatures and are therefore considered beneficial. Occasionally they enter houses, probably by accident, but will not damage the house or its contents. They can bite, but in our area such bites are usually harmless.

One type, the house centipede, is observed less often. It is grayish or tannish, about 2-3 cm (.79-1.18 in) long, and has very long legs and antennae. Its other characteristics are the same as those of centipedes in general.

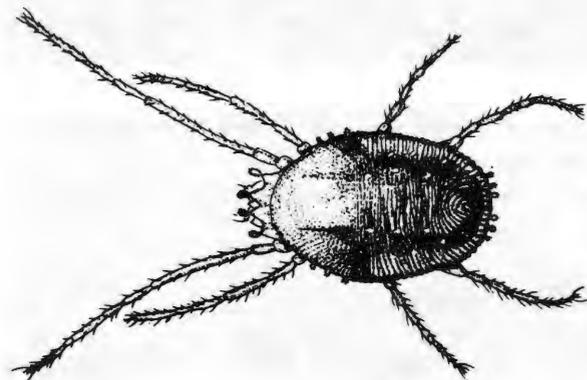
**Clover Mites**

Clover mites are about the size of a pinhead. Variously colored (red, brown, black, or green), they are distinguished from other mites by their extremely long front legs which extend forward. When outdoor conditions are unfavorable—in fall, winter, and spring—they frequently invade homes, attracted by the warmth inside. They can

move through cracks and crevices in very large numbers. In addition to being a nuisance, they will stain walls and curtains when crushed.



Centipede



Clover Mite

### Earwigs

Earwigs are shiny, brown, fast-moving insects about 1–2 cm (.39–.79 in) with a pair of forceps (pincers) at the end of the abdomen. They live in soil or on the soil surface, or in debris. Frequently, they hide under boards, rocks, etc., feeding on dead organic matter as well as on a wide variety of plants.

Earwigs seldom bite but will try to pinch when disturbed. In houses they can become a nuisance by hiding in bedding, under dishes, papers, etc.

### Weevils

Weevils are beetles which enter houses at various times of the year, especially in the fall. There are several kinds: the black vine weevil, about 1 cm (.39 in) long and black with light, faint markings; strawberry root weevil, dark brown to black, about 5 mm (.20 in) long; and, rough strawberry root weevil, dark brown to black, 7–8 mm (.27–.31 in) long. They enter houses singly or only a few at a time, cause no damage to house or contents, and are not known to harm houseplants.

Weevils normally feed on outdoor plants and are not often seen in houses. Grass weevils, however, can gather on the sides of houses and enter in large numbers. Habits of grass weevils are not known, but most problems with them occur in houses near pastures or grassy lots. Grass weevils are about 3–4 mm (.12–.16 in) long and are grayish or tannish.

Inside a house, weevils often appear sluggish or dead but are not. Entomologists believe that they and other beetles enter buildings to spend the winter.

### Millipedes

Millipedes, sometimes called thousand-legged worms, are insect-like creatures which have worm-shaped bodies with many legs—often a hundred or more. They vary in size and color, often brownish or blackish, and are from 1–5 cm long (.039–.20 in).

Millipedes feed on dead organic matter in or on the soil and prefer damp areas. They will



Earwig



Grass Weevil



Obscure Root Weevil



Millipede

sometimes feed on living plants, but this is not a significant problem in most areas.

Occasionally, millipedes enter houses accidentally and may be attracted to damp areas such as basements, garages, and laundry rooms. They will not damage the house or its contents, with the possible exception of house plants, which is not common.

### **Sagebugs, Grassbugs, and Other True Bugs**

True bugs vary in size and color and are characterized by wings which, when at rest, are held flat over the abdomen. The front wings are thickened and leathery for about two-thirds of their length, while the tips are membranous. These insects possess segmented beaks and some are capable of inflicting painful bites.

Sagebugs are the most frequently encountered type. They are grayish brown, about 4–6 mm (.16–.24 in) long, and can invade homes and other buildings by the thousands during the fall.

Stinkbugs are shield-shaped and brown-green or gray in color. Found only in rural areas where they have migrated from wildlands or crop areas, they are not damaging to homes or harmful to people but may be a nuisance.

### **Sowbugs and Pillbugs**

Sowbugs are insect-like creatures which are oval, grayish, and about 1 cm (.39 in) long. Pillbugs look much like sowbugs but are different in that they can roll up into balls when disturbed.

Both sowbugs and pillbugs live in damp places and are commonly found under boards and debris as well as in organic matter. They usually feed on dead organic matter but may also feed on tender living plants, though generally not causing any significant damage in most areas.

Sowbugs and pillbugs occasionally enter houses and may be attracted to damp areas such as basements, garages, or interior flower-growing



Leaf-footed Bug



Sowbug



Black Widow Spider



Springtail

areas. They will not damage the house or its contents, with the possible exception of house plants, which rarely occurs.

**Spiders**

Spiders are insect-like creatures which feed on insects and other small animals. Some spiders seldom enter houses; others are quite commonly found indoors. Except for webbing and droppings, spiders will not damage a house or its contents.

All spiders have venom and if large enough are capable of biting. They will not usually bite people unless carelessly handled. Although the bite of most spiders is usually harmless to people, the bite of the black widow spider, which is found in our area, can cause serious injury. The black widow is shiny black and almost always has a reddish orange, hourglass-shaped mark on the underside of its abdomen. The abdomen may also have other spots and stripes, usually reddish or white. Black widows are about 1 cm (.39 in) long, exclusive of the legs.

**Springtails**

Springtails are very small, 2 mm (.08 in) or less long, black white, gray, or blue creatures that feed on decaying organic matter in or on the soil. They prefer moist areas and during the drier parts of the year are not usually noticed. However, on warm, mild days in late fall, winter, and early spring they appear on the soil surface in large numbers.

Springtails may be seen covering the surfaces of puddles, swimming pools, and other small bodies of water, or piled up against the sides of houses. From a distance they may appear like piles of soot. They are most commonly seen in damp wooded areas where organic matter is abundant.

Sometimes springtails gather around doors and may enter houses. Most have the ability to jump or hop like fleas. They will do no damage to a house or its contents but can damage seedlings and tender plants. However, this damage does not often occur in our area. Springtails are also found in the soil of house plants but seldom cause damage.

**CONTROL OF DOORYARD PESTS**

Pest	Insecticide*	Remarks
Centipedes	pyrethrin, AB	Control not usually warranted. Centipedes are beneficial, eliminating other pests. Best advice: collect and dispose of them outdoors where they can continue to be useful, but use caution as they can bite!
Clover mites	diazinon or kelthane or malathion (spray outdoors only)	Spray outside walls, foundation and area 10 feet out from sides of building whenever mites are active. Also spray surrounding foliage. Frequent applications may be needed. Severe infestations are difficult to control with hand equipment. Power sprayers give the type of coverage and spray volume needed for best control.  About 12 gallons of spray is needed to treat the area around an average two-bedroom home with a hand sprayer. For larger volumes use power sprayers and apply the following concentrations: malathion 0.5% or diazinon 0.1%.
Earwigs	Baygon, AB, B diazinon, D, EC, WP	Indoors: destroy mechanically or with a registered contact spray or aerosol. Outdoors: spray or dust around foundation and entrances. Baits may be used outdoors where earwigs hide or are often noticed.

\*EC = emulsifiable concentrate; D = dust; WP = wettable powder; AB = aerosol bomb; B = bait.

Pest	Insecticide*	Remarks
Grass weevils and other weevils		Difficult to control with chemicals. Usually the best procedure is to sweep them up with a broom or vacuum and dispose of them.
Millipedes	Baygon, AB or diazinon, EC, D (outdoors only)	Spray around foundations and entrances to house. Repeat applications often necessary for control.
Sagebugs, Grassbugs, etc.	No chemical controls registered	Good screens on doors and windows help prevent entry. Best procedure: vacuum or sweep up, then dispose of them.
Sowbugs and Pillbugs	Baygon, AB or diazinon, EC, D (outdoors only)	Spray around foundations and entrances. Repeat applications often necessary for control.
Spiders	diazinon, EC (outdoors only) pyrethrin, AB Baygon, AB	They are predators and thus are beneficial. If necessary, direct spraying with aerosol bombs will kill individual spiders in the home.
Springtails	diazinon, EC (outdoors only)	Apply as a residual spray around foundations and entrances to home. Repeat applications necessary for control.

\*EC = emulsifiable concentrate; D = dust; WP = wettable powder; AB = aerosol bomb; B = bait.

By Roy M. Davidson, Jr., Research Technologist, and Arthur Antonelli, Extension Entomologist, WSU Western Washington Research and Extension Center, Puyallup. Issued by Washington State University Cooperative Extension, J.O. Young, Director, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture in furtherance of the Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Cooperative Extension programs and policies comply with federal and state laws and regulations on nondiscrimination regarding race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, and handicap. Trade names have been used to simplify the presentation of information. No endorsement of products is intended. Revised from and replaces EM 4360. Published June 1983. 25¢.



Use pesticides with care. Read the label and follow its directions. Never smoke while using pesticides and avoid breathing the spray or dust. Wear natural rubber gloves when handling pesticides. Wash hands and face carefully with soap and water after applying. If insecticides are spilled on skin or clothing, remove contaminated clothing and wash skin thoroughly. Store pesticides in their original containers and be sure labels remain on the containers. Keep containers away from food or feed and out of reach of children or irresponsible persons.