

Occasional Invaders

Centipedes

Centipede



House Centipede

or plants. They occasionally enter the home, but do not feed or cause damage. They may be discouraged by tight fitting doors and screens, and by removal of decaying vegetation, leaf litter, and mulch from around the foundations of homes. Vacuum up those that enter the home and dispose of the bag outdoors. If they become intolerable and chemical treatment becomes necessary, residual insecticides may be used sparingly. Poisons baits may be used outdoors with caution, particularly if there are children or pets in the home. A residual insecticide spray applied across a door threshold may prevent the millipedes from entering the house.



Millipede

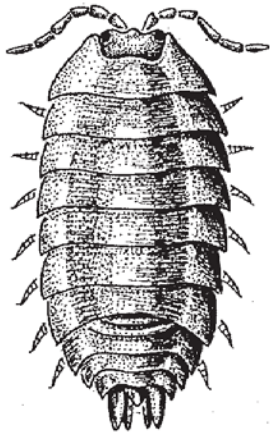
Centipedes are elongate, flattened animals with one pair of legs per body segment. The number of legs may vary from 10 to over 100, depending on the species. They also have long jointed antennae. The house centipede is about an inch long, gray, with very long legs. It lives outdoors as well as indoors, and may be found in bathrooms, damp basements, closets, etc. it feeds on insects and spiders. If you see a centipede indoors, and can't live with it, escort it outdoors. Centipedes are beneficial by helping control insect pests and spiders.

Sowbugs and Pillbugs

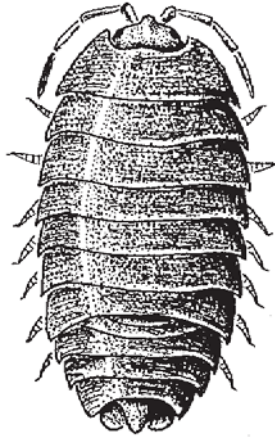
Sowbugs and pillbugs are the only crustaceans that have adapted to a life on land. They are oval in shape, convex above, and flat beneath. They are gray in color, and 1/2 to 3/4 of an inch long. Sowbugs have two small tail-like appendages at the rear, and pillbugs do not. Pillbugs can roll up into a ball, but sowbugs cannot. Sowbugs and pillbugs live outdoors and like moist locations, such as under objects and vegetable debris. They are beneficial decomposers by feeding on decaying organic matter in the garden.

Millipedes

Millipedes are cylindrical in shape, have 2 pairs of legs per body segment, and short antennae. They have many body segments, and often have 30 or more pairs of legs. Millipedes vary in length from less than an inch to more than two inches. The most common millipedes that invade homes are brownish, and 1 to 1 1/2 inches long. Millipedes live outdoors where they feed on decaying organic material



Sowbug



Pillbug

They may invade damp basement areas as well as first floors of houses. Sowbugs and pillbugs can be effectively controlled by modifying conditions that are favorable to their development immediately outside of the home. Hiding places such as stones or boards close to the house should be removed. Food sources such as leaves, grass clippings, or mulch that are close to the building should also be removed. Properly ventilate basements and crawlspaces to eliminate excess moisture. Repair and seal cracks and openings along foundation walls, doors, and windows. Tighten up door and window openings with weather stripping. Insecticide sprays inside homes are not recommended because sowbugs and pillbugs dry out quickly and die.

Springtails

Springtails are very small insects, 1 to 2 mm in length, and whitish or grayish in color. They do not bite. Springtails possess a forked appendage at the rear that enables them to jump. For the most part, springtails feed on algae, fungi, fungal spores, pollen, and decaying vegetable matter.

They may occasionally be a problem in bathrooms, kitchens, and basements. Infestations in buildings are usually associated with dampness, organic matter, and

mold. Springtails usually occur in the soil, but also may be found under potted plants, and in decaying vegetable matter. Springtails do no damage, but are a nuisance by their presence, and the fact that they can jump.



Springtail

Springtails inside a structure, generally suggest some kind of moisture problem. The moisture may be from a leaky pipe, or excessively high humidity. They may also enter a building seeking moisture when their outside habitat becomes too dry. Drying out the affected area will often eliminate the springtails. Insecticide sprays inside the home are generally not recommended. If springtails are coming in from the outdoors, a perimeter treatment with an insecticide may be necessary.

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References:

Oldowski, W., S. Daar, and H. Olkowski. 1991. *Common-Sense Pest control*. Newtown, CT: The Taunton Press. 715 pp.

Mallis, A. 1990 *Handbook of Pest Control*. Cleveland, OH: Franzak & Foster. 1152 pp.

Illustration of springtail and house centipede redrawn from: Mallis, A. 1990. *Handbook of Pest Control* Cleveland, OH: Franzak & Foster Co. 1152 pp.

Protect the Bay

Use Pesticides and Fertilizers Wisely

ALWAYS READ THE PESTICIDE LABEL AND FOLLOW ALL DIRECTIONS AND SAFETY PRECAUTIONS.

Mention of trade names does not constitute an endorsement by the Maryland Cooperative Extension, University of Maryland, College Park, MD.

**Have a home pest or garden question?
Call the Home and Garden Information Center
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[Return to Beginning of Document](#)