

# PestGazette

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## Migrating Millipedes

Don't be alarmed if you go into your basement looking for a rake this fall and, instead, find long, brown bugs climbing up your wall or on the floor. You may be experiencing a millipede migration. Millipedes often migrate in the fall especially after heavy rains or a sudden temperature drop. And, if you live in a newly-developed neighborhood where they used to find refuge in old leaf litter and fallen logs, they may now seek out your home instead.

Millipedes are mostly a nuisance pest. They do not do damage or bite humans, but they can be annoying. To get rid of millipedes indoors, you can simply vacuum them up. But if they continue to find their way indoors you should call us.

First, we will identify all points of entry that millipedes can use to enter your home. This means that door sweeps and screens need to be checked. Exterior gaps, cracks and crevices should be inspected and sealed with caulk. There should also be a three foot area around your home that is free of trees, shrubs or plants. Anything you can do to reduce moisture near the home will help, so consider switching from wood mulch that holds moisture and attracts millipedes (*and other pests*) to pea-sized gravel instead. Soil and mulch should be graded so that water drains *away from* your home's foundation. (This is a good piece of general anti-pest advice, as most pests are drawn to standing water and moisture!)

## Making a Big Stink

**T**his problem really stinks! Literally. Of course, we're talking about stink bugs who get their name because they smell really bad when they are crushed. Stink bugs are becoming an increasing problem, especially on the East Coast with the exotic brown marmorated stink bug, which was brought in from China a few years ago.

An adult brown marmorated stink bug is about three-quarters of an inch long, with a brown, marble-like exoskeleton covering its body. It has the typical "shield" shape of other stink bugs which are all a part of the insect family Pentatomidae. It has become a nuisance pest both indoors and outdoors in the United States, especially on warm fall days when it searches for a protected place to spend the winter. It occasionally reappears during warmer sunny periods throughout the winter, and again as it emerges in the spring months. As the days warm in the spring, the emerging adult stink bugs



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## Hiding in Plain Sight

Indian Meal Moths Can Enter Your Home Hidden Inside Fall Decorations, Pop Corn and Other Stored Products

**F**all means Halloween, apple crisp, pumpkin pies, cornucopias and harvest decorations. But sometimes the things we use to decorate our homes can harbor unwanted guests like the Indian meal moth!

Indian meal moths are considered a pantry or stored product pest. The adult moth female lays her eggs in products such as corn kernels (*including pop corn*), rice, nuts, seeds, beans, dried fruits, chocolate, spices, flour, oats and cereals. A single female can lay up to 300 eggs at a time! A small yellow larva will hatch out of the egg and wander around within the product to feed. Larvae do the damage to the product and are responsible for the holes you may see in kernels as well as small bite marks, webbing and fecal material. A larva then spins a cocoon or pupal case from which an adult will emerge to mate, and the cycle will begin all over again.

Often times, homeowners bring Indian meal moths home with them in such products as birdseed, dog and cat food, or even infested cereals or beans from a grocery store. Usually they are in products that rotate slowly off grocery store shelves. When shopping, always inspect products for signs of infestation — larvae, webbing, holes in packaging, or the pupal cases or adult moths themselves. If by chance you do accidentally bring them home, we can help you get rid of them. Just give us a call. ■



An adult brown marmorated stink bug is about three-quarters of an inch long, with a brown, marbled exoskeleton covering its body.

## Stink Bugs (continued from page 1)

mate, and the female deposits her eggs on the leaves of fruit trees.

Beginning in May, the nymphs feed on the host fruit trees and by mid-summer they molt into adults. Since the insects are strong flyers, they spread out from around the infested area and can fly hundreds of yards at a time. Their search for a winter home typically peaks in late October. By the end of November, the stink bugs stop flying and hunker down for the winter. Where there is an infestation, the insects can be found in trees and houses.

Although stink bugs don't harm humans and do not reproduce inside houses, their unpleasant odor makes them terrible houseguests! They get their name "stink bug" from scent glands on the abdomen and under the wings. When the animal is disturbed, the scent glands discharge an unpleasant odor that spreads as the wings flap.

Mechanical exclusion is the best method to keep stink bugs from entering homes and buildings. Typically, stink bugs will emerge from cracks under or behind baseboards, around window and door trim, and around exhaust fans or lights in ceilings. Homeowners can seal these openings with caulk or other suitable materials to prevent the insects from crawling into the home. Cracks around windows, doors, siding, utility pipes, behind chimneys, and underneath the wood fascia and other openings should be sealed with good quality silicone or silicone-latex caulk. Damaged screens on doors and windows should be repaired or replaced.

Call us to help you with these tasks. We can also treat the exterior of your home to keep the stink bugs (*and other pests like boxelder bugs and ladybugs*) from coming in this winter. Let us help you to get the bugs out *before* they make a big stink! ■



## Lyme Disease

Lyme Disease is the most common tick-borne disease in North America. It is a well-publicized disease and has gained national attention due to its rapid spread. The causative agent of this disease is a microbe called *Borrelia burgdorferi*. Most cases of Lyme Disease in the United States are in the eastern half of the country but there is a band of Lyme activity along the West Coast and there are several pockets in the Southwest, making it a nationwide concern.

The reservoir for Lyme is small mammals, specifically rodents. Ticks, primarily the blacklegged or deer tick, *Ixodes scapularis*, feed on deer and mice and the ticks transfer the microbe to humans. The disease does not appear to affect the deer and is not

documented affecting the other hosts. Research has shown that ticks must be attached for up to 24 hours before the disease can be transmitted to animals, including humans. Since many ticks are small, self examination is very important to see if ticks are attached after humans frequent tick-infested areas.

The symptoms of Lyme may include a rash with a bulls-eye appearance, lethargy, lesions, and finally symptoms including chronic arthritis, especially in the knee joints. There are about 20,000 cases of Lyme disease in the United States annually. Treatment can be done through a regimen of antibiotics if properly diagnosed early by physician. While deaths do occur due to Lyme, treatment is generally successful. However, chronic joint issues may linger.

To reduce the presence of all kinds of ticks in your yard, be sure to keep your grass cut short and your pets on veterinary-monitored tick preventatives. (There is a canine vaccine against Lyme disease and an annual booster as well.) Do not encourage deer and other wildlife to travel in your yard. Ask us to come out to inspect your yard for ticks and evidence of tick-infested urban wildlife. We can help by making suggestions for trapping and removal of urban wildlife, and also for lawn treatments with materials specific for keeping ticks away. ■



**Above: Adult Deer Tick**

Since many ticks are small, self examination is very important. If you visit a tick-infested area, check carefully to make sure no ticks have attached to your skin.



Fungus gnats are often mistaken for mosquitoes since adults look very similar to an untrained eye.

They are 1/8th to 1/10th inch long, black, slender, and delicate with long legs, antennae and one pair of wings. They also have a prominent, pointed abdomen.

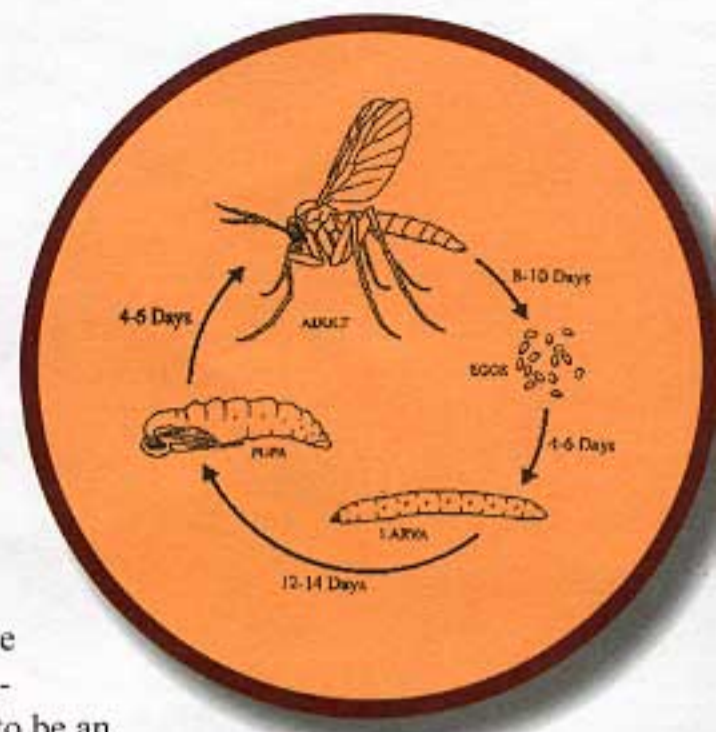
## Fungus Gnats

**F**ungus gnats occasionally become a nuisance indoors when adults emerge in large numbers from potted plants or flower boxes containing damp soil. Adults are attracted to lights and are often first noticed at windows. Fungus gnats are often mistaken for mosquitoes since adults look very similar to an untrained eye. They are 1/8th to 1/10th inch long, black, slender, and delicate with long legs, antennae and one pair of wings. They also have a prominent pointed abdomen.

Fungus gnats reproduce in moist, shaded areas in decaying organic matter such as leaf litter. The entire life cycle requires only four weeks at a room temperatures of approximately 75 degrees Fahrenheit. It does not necessarily have to be an over-watered plant from which the fungus gnats emanate, they may appear in any area of high moisture that can signify a plumbing leak, a backed up gutter situation, or a standing water flat roof issue after a series of rains. They feed on the molds and fungi growing in soils and soiled materials. In a commercial business setting, the most common occurrence of fungus gnats is in a potted plant or plant bed that has been recently over-watered. Too much water allows the molds and fungi to grow and secondarily encourages the growth of fungus gnats.

Larvae, which feed in soil high in organic matter, can injure the roots of bedding plants, African violets, cyclamens, poinsettias and foliage plants. Larvae not only feed on fungi and decaying organic matter, but on living plant tissue, particularly the root hairs and small feeder roots. Plant symptoms may appear as sudden wilting, loss of vigor, poor growth, yellowing and foliage loss. Fungus gnats are harmless to humans and animals.

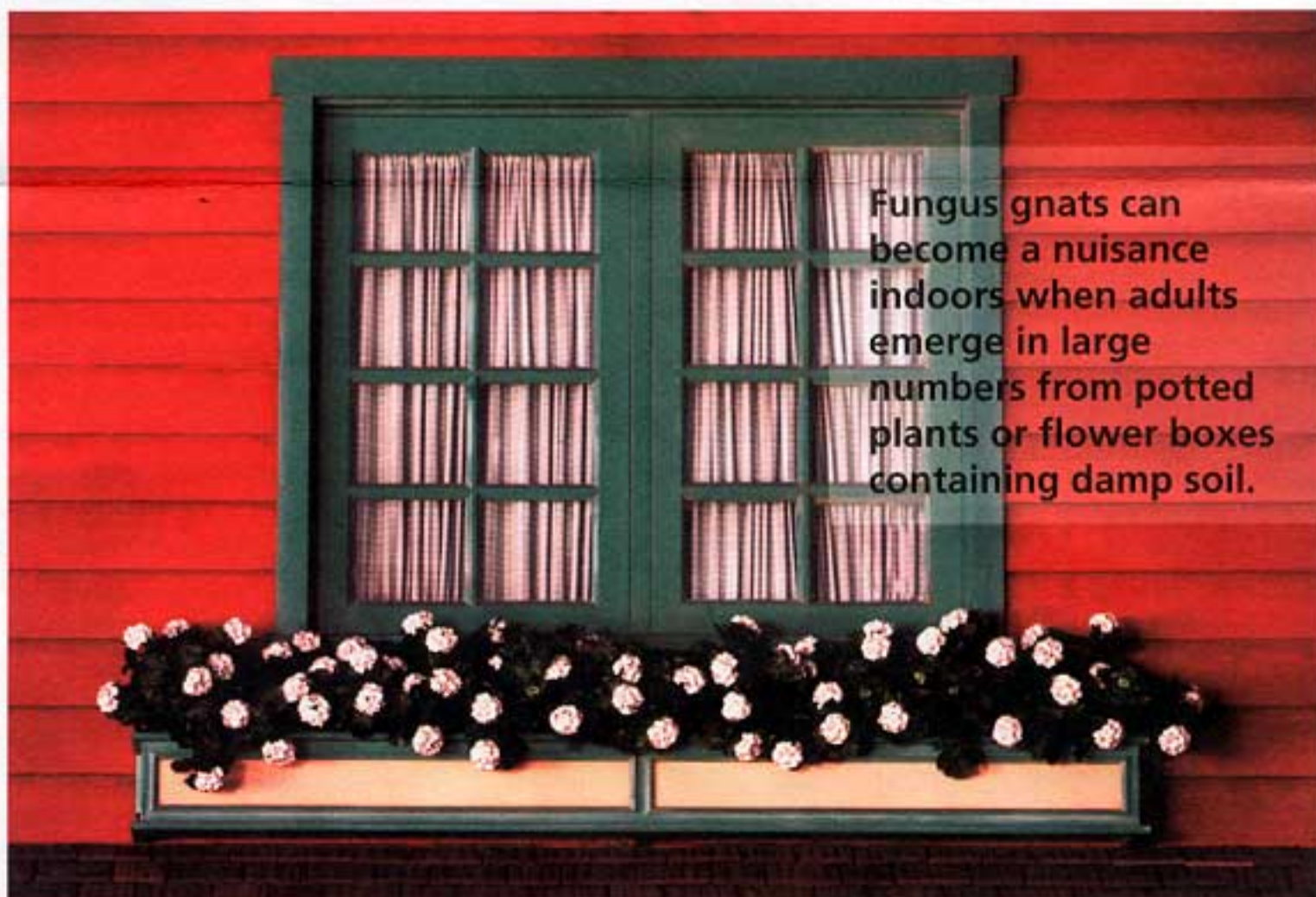
To prevent fungus gnat occurrence, always inspect plants carefully before purchasing them for any signs of insect infestations. Over-watering, water leaks and poor drainage may result in a buildup of fungus gnats. If you allow the soil to dry as much as possible between watering, this will kill most larvae effectively. Houseplants taken outside during warm weather may become infested with insects before being brought back indoors. Remove all old plant material and debris in and around your home. Practice good sanitation. If fungus gnats persist, call us for help. ■



## Economy Pest Control, Inc.



Annapolis: (410) 266-6611  
Washington: (301) 261-8388  
Baltimore: (410) 841-6922  
Eastern Shore: (410) 643-0147  
Glen Burnie: (410) 761-6635  
Columbia: (410) 997-2174  
Catonsville: (410) 744-3353  
Pasadena: (410) 437-5119  
Laurel: (301) 490-6433  
Montgomery Co: (301) 279-0901  
[www.economypestcontrol.biz](http://www.economypestcontrol.biz)



Fungus gnats can become a nuisance indoors when adults emerge in large numbers from potted plants or flower boxes containing damp soil.