

# 6 MANAGEMENT OF ANNOYING PESTS OUTSIDE THE HOME

Before deciding that control is needed, try to identify the critters occurring outdoors and learn what their habits are. Are the things you see really pests? We may need to change our perspective about seeing insects and other arthropods outdoors. Many are harmless or even beneficial in the outdoor environment. Spiders, for instance, feed on a large number of insects, and in some countries they are even brought into cropland to control insects. Outdoor lighting that attracts insects may also attract spiders that prey on them. Changing to yellow lights when insects are most active or turning off outside lights may help reduce the numbers found. Lights directly above a door attract insects; those placed away from the

door may still provide adequate lighting but will lessen the chance that insects will be carried in accidentally by people or pets whenever the door is opened.

Some of the insects encountered outdoors may occasionally invade the home. Weather can influence their population numbers and behavior. Very dry years may cause insects or other arthropods to move near foundations or garages because the foundation itself holds some moisture. Very moist years may drive them to higher ground to avoid drowning in water-soaked soils. In large numbers they can be an extreme nuisance, especially when they start to move up foundation walls and into garages.

Some small outdoor insects may fit through standard window screening. If insects are getting in, possibly attracted to light at night, it may be advisable to shut windows, use another light source, change to finer-mesh screening, or use lightproof window coverings.




Maintenance can help keep numbers of insects and arthropods low outside the home and may prevent them from getting indoors. Do not allow birds to build nests on the sides of buildings or adjacent to them. Mites that feed on the birds often get into houses from these nests when the young have fledged. Once inside they look for a warmblooded animal to feed on.

Tightening and repairing screening as needed can keep many pests out of homes. Altering the habitat near the house and foundation can do much to discourage insects and other arthropods from being there in the first place.

Harborage outdoors near the house foundation, doors, patios, or porches should be avoided wherever possible. To prevent future pest problems, clean up brush, accumulated dead leaves, and other debris; trim shrubbery or trees that touch the building; and carefully select plants and mulching materials.

Pesticide guidelines are found in

**Table 6. Annoying pests outside the home**

<i>Insect</i>	<i>Description and cultural management recommendations</i>
<p><b>Ants</b></p> 	<p>Beneficial because they help clean up the environment, feeding on a variety of substances, including dead insects and other animal matter, sweets, starches, and fats. Will enter houses in search of food but will leave if none is present. Caulking and other home repairs will help keep ants out. Locate and eliminate nesting sites. If needed, spot treat foraging trails and nests. <b>Home remedy:</b>* Boiling water poured on shallow nests may be effective.</p>
<p><b>Black flies</b></p> 	<p>Biting flies that are active during the daytime. When numerous, their irritation and annoyance can be unbearable. They breed in fast-moving streams and rivers. If possible, avoid being outdoors during black fly season. Wear protective clothing that the insects cannot bite through.</p>
<p><b>Boxelder bug</b></p> 	<p>A tree-feeding red and black bug that can be a nuisance pest around the home, usually in fall when seeking sheltered sites for overwintering. If openings are not available, bugs will not be able to enter homes to overwinter.</p>

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**Table 6. Annoying pests outside the home** *(continued)*

**Insect**

**Description and cultural management recommendations**

**Carpenter bees**



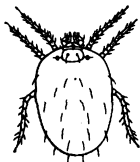
ACTUAL SIZE

Structural pests that bore holes for nesting in face boards of porches, windows, and door frames. Like other bees, carpenter bees are pollinators and are considered beneficial. Once nesting sites are established, the bees tend to return to the site year after year, preferring rough-cut untreated wood surfaces over painted or well-finished surfaces. Screen bees from nesting sites, especially in spring and early summer. Fill holes with putty and repaint as needed. Hanging trap boards may cause bees to use these instead of the wood of the house. Boards may gradually be moved away from house.

**Chiggers**



ACTUAL SIZE



Minute red to orange-yellow larval mites that bite people, causing intense itching. When entering known chigger-infested areas, wear long pants with bottoms tucked into socks or boots.

**Clover mites**



ACTUAL SIZE



See Table 2, Annoying pests inside the home. Establish a vegetation border 18–24 in. wide around foundation of house or building. Trim shrubs so they do not touch house.

**Crickets**



ACTUAL SIZE



Feed on most vegetation and will also eat pet foods left outside or in basement. Often enter homes in late fall when outdoor food is scarce. Remove accumulations of moist debris from basement and ground-floor entrances and windows. Some crickets are attracted to light at night—switch to yellow bulbs. Be sure windows and doors are tightly sealed to prevent entry into buildings.

**Earwigs**



ACTUAL SIZE



Nuisance pests that are easily recognized by the “forceps” on hind end of body. Keep areas around entrances dry and clear of compost, debris, and decaying leaves; keep storage areas clear of damp newspapers or watersoaked carpets. Rolled newspaper can be used as a trap; remove and dispose of earwigs daily. In wet areas their feeding may damage some plants.

**Fleas**



ACTUAL SIZE



See Table 2, Annoying pests inside the home. Spot treat pet resting/sleeping areas. Remove and wash pet bedding regularly. Flea-comb pets regularly. Outdoor flea control is important to making indoor control successful. Cat fleas are carried by raccoons, possums, and other dogs or cats. Keeping these animals out of your yard (e.g., tight garbage can lids) will help you keep fleas off your pet.

**Flies**



ACTUAL SIZE

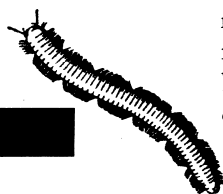


Eliminate breeding areas: manure, garbage, piles of grass clippings, and other rich and decaying organic matter. Spread to dry. Sticky flypaper is useful in entryways if flies congregate there.

**Millipedes**



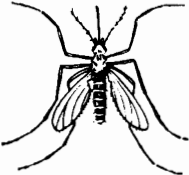




ACTUAL SIZE



See Table 2, Annoying pests inside the home. Keep ground-level entrance areas free of rotting leaves and debris; trim or remove shrubs to promote air circulation and drying near foundation. Sweep up and destroy millipedes daily. In very moist years large numbers of millipedes may move near foundations to escape excessive soil moisture, and control may be difficult.

*continued*

**Table 6. Annoying pests outside the home** (continued)

Insect	Description and cultural management recommendations
<p><b>Mosquitoes</b></p>  <p>ACTUAL SIZE</p>	<p>Empty or dispose of all receptacles that can hold stagnant water (including old tires) in which mosquitoes breed. Several useful repellent and repellent formulations are available. Check with your department of environmental conversation on legality before you apply anything to water.</p>
<p><b>Moss</b> (on roofs)</p>	<p>A simple plant growth that thrives in damp, shaded locations. Usually found on north slopes of roofs and roots shaded by overhanging trees. Remove overhanging branches; scrape away as much moss as possible.</p>
<p><b>Slugs and snails</b></p>  <p>Garden snail</p>	<p>Keep area near foundations dry and free of refuse or piles of organic matter (such as decaying leaves) that may attract slugs and snails. <b>Home remedy:</b>* As a bait, use beer <math>\frac{3}{4}</math> in. deep in steep-sided dish or tray. Various moisture-holding devices such as an upside down flower pot or empty grapefruit skin can be used to trap slugs and snails during the day. They need to be removed (wearing gloves) and disposed of daily before dark.</p>
<p><b>Sowbugs and pillbugs</b></p>  <p>ACTUAL SIZE</p>	<p>Gray-colored, small crustaceans that roll up into a ball when handled. Feed primarily on decaying wood. Remove food sources from around the home. Same as for millipedes.</p>
<p><b>Ticks</b></p>  <p>ACTUAL SIZE</p>	<p>Avoid tick-infested areas if possible. Stay in center of trails and paths. Wear light-colored, long-sleeved shirts and long pants with bottoms tucked into socks or boots. It is easier to spot ticks on light-colored clothing. Check yourself, pets, and children frequently while outside. Check again at home (at least once in a 24-hour period). Ticks must feed for many hours before diseases are transmitted to people or pets. Repellents are available commercially.</p>
<p><b>Wasps and hornets</b></p>  <p>ACTUAL SIZE</p>	<p>Stinging insects that often build nests near occupied dwellings and may become a nuisance or danger to those allergic to their sting. Social insects; many individuals live in the same nest. Species in New York State are annual nesters. Most are paper wasps that use wood pulp to build their nests. Attracted to unfinished wood decks, lawn furniture, or awnings; and usually build nests there. Painting or oiling these surfaces reduces their attractiveness to paper wasps. Check periodically outside the house during early summer to find and remove small nests. By August and September, wasp populations will be highest. Use screens in buildings and screen ventilators to attics. If possible, wait until frost kills insects, then remove and dispose of nests.</p>

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**FURTHER READING**

*Common Sense Pest Control Quarterly.* Bio-Integral Resource Center newsletter. P.O. Box 7414, Berkeley, Calif. 94707.

Hansen, M. 1993. *Pest Control for Home and Garden.* Consumer Reports Books, Yonkers, N.Y. 372 pp.

*IPM Practitioner.* Bio-Integral Resource Center newsletter. P.O. Box 7414, Berkeley, Calif. 94707.

Olkowski, W., S. Daar, and H. Olkowski. 1991. *Common Sense Pest Control: Least Toxic Solutions for Your Home, Garden, Pets, and Community.* Taunton Press, Newtown, Conn. 715 pp.

Ware, G. W. 1988. *A Complete Guide to Pest Control: With and Without Chemicals.* Thomson Publications, Fresno, Calif. 304 pp.