



Overwintering Pests

Don't let your home become a haven for unwanted pests this fall

Fall is the time of year when humans and animals alike begin to think about the harsh realities of winter. For insects, winter can be a challenging proposition and in some species, the thought is enough to drive them indoors for protection from the elements. Pests will begin to secure themselves in the late summer and early fall well before temperatures begin to drop dangerously low.

There are a variety of pests that overwinter, including invasive species like the brown marmorated stink bug and multicolored Asian ladybeetle, and native species like box elder bugs

and cluster flies. Most overwintering pests make themselves known as they transition from the spring and summer environment to your home by massing in sometimes, though not always, staggering numbers on exterior walls. Typically, south and west facing walls are more likely to attract potential overwintering pests due to the accumulated warmth of sunshine throughout the day.

If you suspect that you might have some of these pests getting ready to try to force their way in your home this fall, let us know and we will assess the situation and take care of the problem before it has a chance to begin. ■



wasp



bee

Busy Bees and Wasps in Autumn

Autumn is a special, busy time not only for humans but for bees and wasps as well. In the fall, these insects begin to prepare for the inevitable winter. Shorter days and cooler temperatures signal to bees that it's time to begin preparing. Like many other animals, bees that live in colonies will remain inactive during winter and stay in their hives. Worker bees will put in long hours to collect nectar and food for their colonies to make sure they have enough provisions to survive the winter.

Solitary wasps prepare differently for winter than bees that live in colonies. Wasps essentially carb load before most die-off during winter. The

only wasps to survive winter are the queens who will re-emerge in the springtime to begin building new nests. The queens survive the winter by going into a dormant state called diapause, which is similar to hibernation in mammals.

The bees and wasps that are busy preparing for winter will unfortunately interfere with our fall festivities and crash our tailgates and BBQs. The corn syrup, sugars, and delicious treats we have are a prime target for a busy bee who needs the extra resources for survival. If you are finding an abundance of bees and wasps in your backyard, don't hesitate to call us to help protect your yard from unwanted visitors. ■

SPOOKY Fall Critters

There are many creatures we associate with fall weather that elicit fear, including ticks, spiders, and centipedes. Many of these arthropods remain well hidden in dark, damp areas. Awareness of their presence and the signs of these pests can help prevent unwanted encounters with these spooky animals.

Ticks can pose a significant health threat to people and their pets by spreading disease. Some ticks even become more active in the fall like the blacklegged tick, so don't let your guard down as the temperatures get a little cooler. Ticks find their hosts by "questing," where they essentially hang on the end of grass or leaves, waving their legs around until they latch on to their host. Keep grass cut and vegetation trimmed around the house and wear a DEET product to help with tick prevention.



deer tick

The majority of spiders are beneficial and feed on insects, but there are some species that can harm humans. The black widow spider, for instance, can bite and inject venom that causes painful swelling and more severe reactions that require a hospital visit. The most common black widow spider has a shiny, black body and a reddish/orange hour glass on the underside of the abdomen.



black widow spider

What's that Cricket?

Many cricket species are occasional invaders that wander indoors in the fall, especially when rainy and cooler weather begins. One of the most common species that wanders indoors during the fall are field crickets. These crickets don't breed indoors but can be a nuisance when they are in large numbers and their populations boom. Field crickets are attracted to lights at night, so reducing bright lights outdoors will help prevent attracting them into your home.

Camel crickets are often found in damp, moist areas like basements and crawl spaces underneath houses. They get their name from their humpbacked appearance. Camel crickets are sometimes referred to as spider crickets because they have long, spider-like legs. They aren't severe pests but can damage items

that are in storage and will spread fecal smears along surfaces that they contact. Camel crickets are harmless to humans and do not bite or spread disease. Reducing moisture can go a long way with helping control camel crickets in damp, dank areas.

House crickets live in the eastern United States and southern California. They are light yellow/brown in color with 3 dark bands on the head between their eyes. These crickets are commonly sold as bait for fishing as well as in pet stores as food for other animals. House crickets do make characteristic chirping noises, which would be an indicator that you have crickets in your home. House crickets can breed indoors, so if you find that you have an infestation of any type of cricket, let us know so we can help identify moisture sources and other problem areas. ■

Recluse spiders, which as a group contains several species, can also harm humans. Their bites are venomous and can cause necrosis of the skin. The brown recluse spider, one of the most commonly known recluse spiders, has a marked violin shape on the top surface of its body, but can easily be misidentified as other spider species with similar markings. If you believe you have any of these species in your home, then please give us a call to come inspect your home and make sure your property and family remains safe.



brown recluse spider

Centipedes, with their long, slender bodies and many legs increase the fear factor for many people. They have one pair of legs per body segment, whereas millipedes have two legs per body segment. Contrary to popular belief, not all centipedes have 100 legs – the number varies per species. The most common species found indoors is the house centipede and is the only centipede species that lives and breeds indoors. Centipedes do have poison glands, but most do not have strong enough jaws to break the skin. Few centipede species are actually dangerous. A typical centipede bite, which is extremely rare, is similar to being stung by a bee. Centipedes stay in moist areas, so if you have a centipede problem in a basement or crawlspace area then there may be underlying moisture problems. Don't hesitate to contact us for any questions regarding centipedes or other pests that you encounter. ■



house centipede



field cricket



camel cricket



house cricket



lady beetle



boxelder bug

Boxelder Bugs and Lady Beetles

Two common pests you could find entering your home this fall are boxelder bugs and Asian lady beetles. Both are brightly colored, red and black insects. Boxelder bugs are more slender than Asian lady beetles and are longer in length, about $\frac{1}{2}$ " long compared to lady beetles that are $\frac{1}{4}$ " long. Lady beetles are round in shape with black spots on their outer wing covers. Asian lady beetles have a "M" or "W" (depending on which way you flip them) marking on the white portion of their thorax, right behind their head. The larvae of lady beetles look entirely different than the adults and have elongated, segmented bodies that are orange/red and black in color.

Both boxelder bugs and lady beetles are attracted to the warm, southern sides of buildings

Both boxelder bugs and lady beetles are attracted to the warm, southern sides of buildings during cooler fall temperatures.

during cooler fall temperatures. You may find large aggregations of these insects under the eaves of your home outside or on the upper side of the building. They will enter homes through cracks and crevices around windows, walls, doors, and around foundations. While both species are considered nuisance pests, they can leave unsightly red stains indoors and emit unpleasant odors. Once indoors, you can vacuum pests but do not smash them to prevent staining. Contact us to help you pest proof your home and help keep pests out of your home the rest of the year. ■