

Insects- the Unwelcomed Guest in Your Home

So you are bugged with indoor insects? You are not alone; you are not the first and will not be the last. For many centuries, people have been dealing with insect pests in their homes. Some of these bugs will inflict harm to humans while others are only nuisances. Some such as fleas are easy to control and can be done by the homeowners while others like bed bugs are difficult to control and may require a professional pest control company. Sometimes spiders, although is not an insect can be very troublesome to the mind when they are seen in the home. Please note that not all spiders are harmful, but at the same time if you are not good at properly identifying them, carefully capture it and bring it to the extension service to be identified. In addition, silverfish and earwigs are often seen in cool dark areas in the home, they are just nuisances and will not inflict any harm.

There are a number of approaches to keep these unwelcome guests from invading your home. We will focus on the exclusion approach.

To help keep pests from picking your home as a retreat, you need to inspect your home for openings that insects use as entryways. Seal any cracks and crevices with caulk, or fill them with steel wool. Although your house seems to be well sealed and free from open cracks, it is still a good idea to do a close inspection of windows and doors. As an extra precaution, spray an insecticide around the perimeter of your home, especially to those areas on the structure where they might enter. It's not a bad idea to do some spot applications of insecticides. This way when the insects encounter those deposits they will be exposed to the insecticides and be killed.

Houseplants can also contribute greatly to the infestation of insects indoor. Common houseplant pests include spider mites, scale insects, aphids, mealybugs, and fungus gnats. All feed by sucking sap from plant cells; except the fungus gnats, which develop in the potting mix. These sucking insects cause leaf discoloration, leaf drop, stunting, distortion, and even the death of the plant. To prevent an infestation of house plant insects, it is advisable to inspect plants before purchase, spray plants with horticultural oil and quarantine all newly bought plants before taking them indoors. It is very important to note that those gardeners who believe in giving plants extra treats by watering heavily and too frequently have problem with fungus gnats.

Moist conditions both attract and allow insects to thrive well. To aid in control, reduce moisture in areas such as under the kitchen sinks, and bathrooms. Remove debris from houseplant pots and trays to reduce hiding places. Also, when it comes to controlling indoor insects, always select a non-chemical approach as your first choice. Things to consider; before applying a chemical, first read the label and that UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola County will identify all unknown insects and give recommendations on how to control them.

For more information on insect pests control and other related horticulture topics, contact Grantly Ricketts with UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola County at 321-697-3000 or email gricketts@ufl.edu.