

Creepy Crawlies

Over the last month, there have been increased reports of insects, mice and other creepy-crawlies invading buildings. As it gets colder, most of these are looking for a warm place to hide. This is not comforting to those whose reactions to seeing these pests indoors range from being slightly annoyed to feeling absolute terror.

One of the most common ways for pests to enter is through cracks and openings in foundations and improperly sealed areas. An occasional walk of the perimeter of the foundation to look for cracks and other potential areas of entry is recommended as well as checking door and window frames. These gaps can usually be filled with sealers or foam insulation.

Plants that have died back in the fall should not be left in planter beds, especially near buildings, since these provide a hiding place for the unwanted visitors as does decorative bark and other living plants near buildings.

Once pests come inside, control options are still available. It is important to keep pests from reaching food sources which are mainly in the kitchen, pantry and food storage areas.

- Monitor for pests using glue-board traps and look around for possible feeding damage or feces from mice.
- Don't store foods rich in carbohydrates, such as grain and pasta, in paper or light-weight packaging that is easily punctured (often the original packaging). Instead, use air-tight, heavy duty, food-grade plastic, metal or glass containers.
- Clean shelves and floor space in storage areas often.

Most spiders feed on other arthropods and stay hidden from people as much as possible. Glue-board traps are useful in monitoring spiders and reducing spider and mouse populations. Traps should be placed in secluded areas potentially used for pest travel. Check traps at least weekly. One glue board will hold a large quantity of spiders. During warmer months, if you are not too squeamish, spiders may be caught and released outside, away from structures, so that they continue to control unwanted insects.

For arthropods such as spiders and insects, pesticides are available for control. For many reasons, these should be considered as a tool for control, but only after other methods have been exhausted. Pesticides control most arthropods whether they are good or bad. Many bad pests and insects breed faster than beneficial pests, so excessive spraying can actually make pest problems worse over time. If spraying is needed, use it as a short-term solution in conjunction with other control methods such as exclusion. Over time, the insects become resistant to pesticides. Many sprays are available for indoor and outdoor use and will last for weeks to months. Keep in mind that no matter

how many control methods are used, it is virtually impossible to exclude all unwanted creepy-crawlies, and squishing or trapping a few is just part of life.