

HOME INVADING PESTS

Various types of insects or insect related pests often invade our homes. With a few exceptions, most do not feed or multiply indoors. These include millipedes, sow bugs, earwigs, cluster flies, and box elder bugs. The best way to prevent infestation of these critters is to caulk and plug up holes and cracks in mortar and around windows and doors to keep them from entering. If they do find their way in, a fly swatter or vacuum cleaner works well. Pesticide can be used as a last resort but only provides a temporary solution.

Household invaders that do feed and multiply indoors, and are truly pests, are flour beetles, meal moths, and ants. As the name suggests, flour beetles and meal moths are often found in and around flour and grain products, including pet foods. Control is achieved by sanitation. Throw out all infested products, clean and disinfect cupboards and storage areas, and store new products in airtight containers.

To control ants, it is best to try to identify them. This helps determine nesting site and food preference. When possible, find the nest and treat it with an insecticide made for indoor use. Alternatively, one can use poison bait commonly sold at stores or by making your own by using 2 parts boric acid and 98 parts food source. As always, keep the poisons out of reach of pets and small children.

Drain flies are fuzzy dark insects with wings that are tiny. They do not bite but are a nuisance. Adults are small enough to pass through ordinary window screens. The wind can carry insects up to mile from their breeding site. They breed in moist areas that contain organic matter like drains, sewage filters, garbage containers, and washing machines. They lay tiny brown or cream-colored egg masses, up to 200 eggs. Larvae are legless worm-like, gray creatures about 3/8 inches long.

To detect breeding site, use glue boards over drains or other areas. Do not allow glue to touch drain. Alternative methods include cleaning pipes or areas with a stiff, long-handled brush or "snake". In clogged drains, follow with boiling water and bleach. Never use bleach with caustic cleaners which can release toxic chlorine gas. Aerosol sprays of pyrethrums or permethrin, labeled for small flying insects, will kill adults.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

https://www.canr.msu.edu/lawn_garden/

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/outreach/>