

PestGazette



Christmas Tree Pests

For many people, the sight and smell of a fresh cut tree epitomizes the holiday season. Twinkling lights and glittering ornaments usually do not evoke concerns about pests, but occasionally pests can be brought into homes on fresh cut trees. Although it is rare, there are a few pests that can hitchhike into your home on a Christmas tree. Warm temperatures inside your home can cause insects remaining on your tree to become active.

Inspect your tree for praying mantis egg masses before bringing it into the house. Look for light tan, walnut sized, frothy egg masses attached to twigs. If you observe an egg mass, cut it out and place it outside in an evergreen shrub or tree and the eggs will hatch in the spring. If a praying mantis egg mass is brought into the house, the eggs will hatch in response to the warm temperatures.

Spiders may also be found on Christmas trees. Like mantises, spiders are predators of insects and are not dangerous to people or

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Overwintering Pests



As temperatures begin to drop during the autumn months, many insects seek shelter inside homes. These so-called overwintering pests do not feed or reproduce during the winter months, but they may emerge on warm days throughout the winter. Overwintering pests don't feed or reproduce inside buildings, but they can still be a nuisance. The following insects are common overwintering pests that you may encounter. If you do, be sure to call us right away to find out how we can help keep you pest-free all year long.

Cluster Flies

Cluster fly larvae feed on earthworms. Adult cluster flies do not eat at all. Adult flies lay their eggs on the soil and the newly hatched larvae tunnel through the soil in search of earthworms. The larvae parasitize the earthworms then pupate in the soil. After emerging, adults mate and lay new eggs.

Cluster flies are large black flies that are often seen inside buildings on sunny days in the winter and spring. They look similar to the common housefly, but have larger, darker bodies. In addition, cluster flies are clumsy fliers and are often found bumbling around windows trying to get outside. Cluster flies seek shelter inside buildings as the weather cools in the fall. They enter through gaps in flashing or through openings in attic vents. Sometimes their numbers can get extremely large inside attics, especially in older homes.



cluster fly

Boxelder Bugs

Boxelder bugs are black with red markings and red eyes. In nature, boxelder bugs feed on many different plants, but are especially attracted to the boxelder maple or the ash-leaved maple. They are sometimes seen clustering on the sides of buildings in the autumn, soaking up the warm rays of the sun on the south facing sides of structures. As the weather continues to cool, boxelder bugs seek shelter from the elements by entering buildings through cracks and crevices in flashing around windows and siding. Although they don't feed or breed indoors, they can leave a stain on light colored curtains or walls if they are crushed, so take care not to squash boxelder bugs if they are encountered indoors.



box elder bug

Brown Marmorated Stink Bugs

The brown marmorated stinkbug is a relatively new overwintering pest. There are many stinkbugs common in North America; some are important agricultural pests while others are beneficial. The brown marmorated stinkbug has a characteristic shield shape and has a brownish-gray mottled appearance with white bands on its antennae and edges of its abdomen.

The brown marmorated stinkbug was accidentally introduced from Asia into Pennsylvania in the 1990s and has since been detected in 34 states across the U.S. Like the other overwintering pests, the brown marmorated stinkbug moves into structures in the autumn as the weather cools. In addition



brown marmorated stink bug

to being a nuisance pest in structures, this stink bug is becoming an important pest in agriculture causing severe economic damage to apple and other tree fruits.

Multicolored Asian Lady Beetles

The multicolored Asian lady beetle is a species of ladybug and as its name suggests, comes in many different colors. This beetle ranges in color from yellow-orange to red. Spots may or may not be present. This beetle is a beneficial predator of aphids and scale insects. Both the larvae and adults have voracious appetites. In fact this beetle was purposely introduced to North America as a biological control for aphid and scale insects.

In nature, lady beetles will often congregate together in large numbers to keep warm during the winter. They will seek protected areas, such as under logs, in leaf litter, or beneath loose bark. The multicolored Asian lady beetle is no exception; however it will often congregate in large numbers inside buildings in addition to natural areas.



Asian lady beetle

Overwintering pests are considered nuisances but in many cases, the sheer number of individuals may make them unbearable. When overwintering pests like these are encountered, don't hesitate to contact us right away to find out how we can help you stop these pests from entering your home or business. ■

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pets. Spiders are either overwintering adults that have become active because of warm temperatures or young spiderlings that have hatched on the tree. Most of these spiders are not adapted to live indoors and typically won't result in an ongoing infestation.

You may also notice white waxy substance on some twigs (especially common on white pine). This is most likely due to the waxy secretions of the pine bark adelgid, an aphid-like insect that won't leave the tree. There are a number of other aphids that may be present on a Christmas tree. One of the largest is the Cinara aphid. Cinara aphids are relatively large (1/8 inch in length), black or brown in color with large legs.

Luckily, none of these pests are a threat to your house, your belongings or your family, but there are some common sense precautions that you can take to keep these nuisance pests out of your home. Mechanical tree shakers, found at many tree lots can be helpful by shaking pests from a tree. Even if a mechanical shaker isn't available, vigorously shaking your tree before bringing it into your home can dislodge many pests, as well as dead needles.

Christmas tree pests are a relatively uncommon occurrence, but a careful inspection of your tree before it is brought into the house can help to keep these nuisance pests where they belong ... outside. ■





Effective mouse control involves sanitation, exclusion, and population reduction. A key to successful long-term mouse control is the limitation of shelter, food and water wherever possible.

House Mice

The house mouse (*Mus musculus*) is one of the most troublesome and economically important rodents in the United States. House mice thrive even in harsh conditions as long as they can find food, warmth and shelter. House mice consume and contaminate food meant for humans, pets, livestock, or other animals. In addition, they can cause considerable damage to structures and property through their gnawing actions, and they can transmit pathogens that cause diseases such as salmonellosis, which is a form of food poisoning. Being around their fur, urine and droppings can cause various illnesses, including allergies, asthma and infestations of ticks or fleas. Did you know the number one reason of unexplained house fires in the U.S. is attributed to the gnawing of wires by rodents in structures?

So, do you need any further convincing that you should get rid of your house mouse infestation? We are rodent experts and can eliminate any rodent infestations your home may be experiencing. If you see any telltale signs of rodent infestation such as nests, droppings, fresh gnaw marks, or tracks, these all indicate areas where mice are active. Since house mice are so small, they can gain entry into homes and other buildings much more easily than rats. As a result, house mouse infestations are probably 10 to 20 times more common than rat infestations. Effective control involves sanitation, exclusion, and population reduction. A key to successful long-term mouse control is the limitation of shelter, food and water wherever possible. Trapping works well when mice are not numerous or it can be used as a follow-up measure after a baiting program, but exclusion keeps them out in the first place. So, let us help you to identify weak points where mice may be gaining access to your home, so that they do not become pests in the first place.

A mouse can slip through a crack that a pencil will fit into (slightly larger than 1/4 inch).

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Mice eat 15-20 times a day, so keep your homes clean and do not leave food out.

A female house mouse can give birth to up to a dozen babies every three weeks. That's 150 babies a year!

Because they carry and transmit viruses, bacteria and other diseases, mice are considered to be troublesome pests.

