

HOME GROUNDS FACT SHEET



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Nassau County



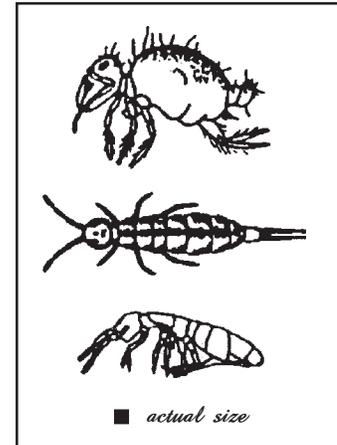
Horticulture Center
Demonstration & Community Gardens
at East Meadow Farm
832 Merrick Avenue
East Meadow, NY 11554
Phone: 516-565-5265

Springtails

Springtails, scientifically known as *Collembola*, are minute insects (usually less than 2mm) that are very common in moist soil. The name springtail refers to the fact that these tiny insects have a forked appendage attached to the back of the underside of the abdomen that can be moved quickly away from the body, usually causing the insect to "jump." The bodies of most springtails are either whitish or grayish and blend in well with their surroundings. Because of their small size and somewhat concealed habitats, they are seldom seen.

Springtails are considered pests in the sense that they occur in large numbers. They are more commonly found outside, but occasionally are found indoors. The majority of species feed on algae, fungi and decayed vegetable matter although a few species will feed on living plants and dead animal matter. Some species also feed on nematodes and may contribute to the natural control of the tiny worms.

In buildings springtails are found in damp places such as kitchens, basements, bathrooms, around drains, on the floor near patio doors, on wet walls, or in the soil of potted plants. Outside they may be seen on the paving blocks surrounding patios and swimming pools.



Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Considerations

IPM is a common sense approach to pest control and plant care. It employs a number of measures to prevent, control or reduce problems. Always use the least toxic methods first.

A good mechanical control, in many instances, is to vacuum the insects and then throw the bag away. Regarding household pests, in addition to regular house-cleaning, the best preventive method is to monitor the home, i.e. note any cracks in foundations, air spaces between windows and frames, poorly-fitting doors, moisture from leaks, etc., and correct such examples/situations.

Management

An important fact in control of these insects is to remember that they are often found outside where there is moisture. Lower humidity will make the habitat undesirable for them and in many cases just airing the room is sufficient.

A fan may be used to keep air moving and may also have the necessary drying effect. Other measures to increase air circulation will aid in making conditions unfavorable for these pests.

If necessary, an insecticide labeled for springtails may be applied in areas where springtails occur.

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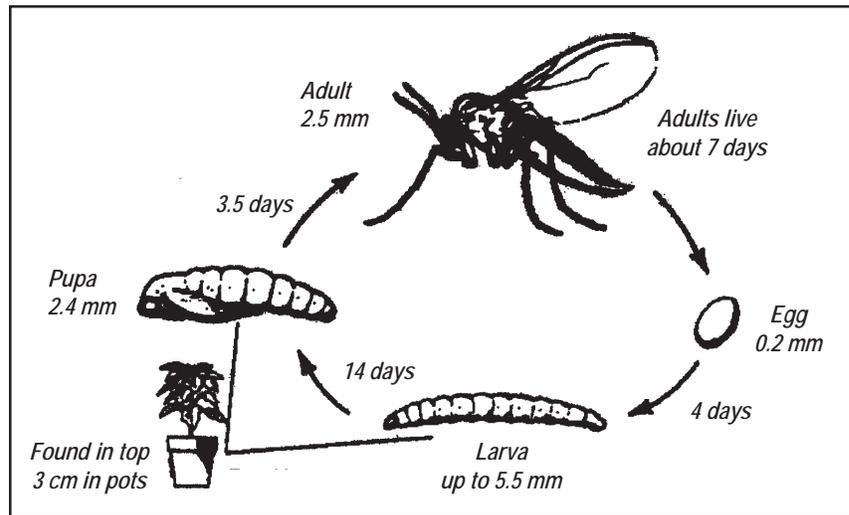
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Fungus Gnat Maggots

Fungus gnats have become more of a pest problem with the increasing use of soilless potting mixes.

The adult flies are attracted to damp locations where fungi are likely to flourish. The larval stage feeds primarily on fungi, but they occasionally attack roots of growing plants and are especially destructive to young plants that are becoming established.

In addition to causing direct injury to growing plants, the adult flies can be a nuisance in the home.



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Management

Removing and discarding growing media and repotting in a sterile one can help reduce this pest. Try to avoid keeping mixes too wet and avoid accumulations of stagnant water, which might occur in pot saucers or other containers. Soil drenches of labeled houseplant insecticides may also provide some control for the soil-borne maggot. Sticky boards or suspended tape will help collect flying adults. To control larvae in houseplants, Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) var. israelensis (Gnatrol) may be used.

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