

PestGazette

Brought to you by **CastleGuard Pest Management**



Winterize Your Home in 10 Easy Steps

Here are a few tips to help keep your home safe, sound and pest-free this winter

1. Trim away any tree branches that come in contact with the house. Ants and wildlife can use these branches to come into our warm homes.
2. Make sure that you have a chimney cap properly installed to prevent birds, rodents and wildlife from entering.
3. Inspect your hose bibs and make sure they are not leaking. If there is a cut-off valve, close it so that your pipes don't burst.
4. Watch the humidity in your basement or crawl space. Dehumidifiers can reduce chances of fungus, stale smell, and insects.
5. Look for any wood in contact with the soil near the house. This can lead to termites.
6. Look for signs of burrowing near the foundation or under decks. This could indicate a possible rodent or wildlife infestation.
7. Keep garage doors closed especially after dusk. Open doors allow mice, rats, and wildlife in.
8. Store pet food and birdseed in plastic bins with tightly fitted tops.
9. Keep all garbage in closed containers both inside and outside the house.
10. Seal any holes in the foundation or anywhere insects or rodents might enter. Add weatherstripping under doors to save energy and to exclude pests.



Brown marmorated stink bug



Asian ladybeetle



Boxelder bug



Cluster fly

Overwintering Pests

Don't let your home become a haven for unwanted pests this fall

Fall is the time of year when humans and animals alike begin to think about the harsh realities of winter. For insects, winter can be a challenging proposition and in some species, the thought is enough to drive them indoors for protection from the elements. It would be foolish to wait until temperatures have dropped dangerously low so these so-called overwintering pests need to secure their spot in the late summer to early fall. There are a variety of pests in this group including invasive species like the brown marmorated stink bug and multi-colored Asian ladybeetle, and native species like box elder bugs and cluster flies. Most overwintering pests

make themselves known as they transition from the spring and summer environment to your home by massing in sometimes, though not always, staggering numbers on exterior walls. Typically, south and west facing walls are more likely to attract potential overwintering pests due to the accumulated warmth of sunshine throughout the day. If you suspect that you might have some of these pests getting ready to try to force their way in your home this fall, let us know and we will assess the situation and take care of the problem before it has a chance to begin. ■

Fungus Gnats

Nobody ever wants to find flies in their house. You are probably familiar with house flies and fruit flies, to common domestic fly pests, but there is another major culprit that you may encounter. With over 800 combined species, fungus gnats and darkwinged fungus gnats are a massive group of tiny pests. Measuring as large as 1/2" and as small as 1/32", fungus gnats might go unnoticed for a while if you aren't paying attention, or you might write off such a miniscule bug as not important enough to take action. While tolerances vary, in no time at all that stray fly or two can become a full-blown infestation that can't be ignored. The entire life cycle for some species takes less than two weeks. If that wasn't bad enough, there is *continued on page 2*



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Sawtooth Grain Beetles

What are they and how can you get rid of them?

The sawtoothed grain beetle is a common pest of bread, cereal, pasta, chocolate, dried food, medicine, and a host of other stored products. About the only thing in a pantry these beetles aren't able to eat is sound and intact kernels; there has to be some damage before they can be exploited. You are more likely to notice the beetles themselves than the damage they cause but there are dozens of other beetles (and a few caterpillars) that wreak havoc in the pantry.

Sawtoothed grain beetles are miniscule, at only 1/8" long, and given the wide range of food sources they will consume, can easily go undetected. Their common name comes from the presence of 6 'teeth' on each side of the thorax (the part of the body between the head and the abdomen), though given their minute nature you may have trouble discerning these teeth with your naked eye. Sawtoothed grain beetles are flattened, brown, and have three distinct body segments when viewed from above. Their flattened nature makes it easy for them to slip into seemingly sealed containers and packaging. Female sawtoothed grain beetles are capable of laying nearly 300 white and shiny eggs in a suitable food source over the span of a few months so an

infestation can quickly reach staggering levels. The tiny larvae are yellowish-white and vaguely caterpillar-like in appearance and as they mature, they will construct a cocoon from food particles and oral secretions. If you notice something tiny moving in your box of Cheerios, don't panic but call us right away to come and get control of the infestation. ■



Over-watered houseplants are the primary cause of fungus gnat infestations. If your house plants are the culprit does this mean they have to go? Not necessarily.

Fungus Gnats (continued from page 1)

at least one species that is parthenogenetic, meaning a single female can start a population without needing a male to fertilize her eggs!

Fungus gnats got their common name from their larval food source. Makes sense, right. However, on that note you might be wondering why on earth fungus-eating gnats would show up in your home. Microscopic fungi can sprout up where there are moisture problems, perhaps related to a leaking sink, problematic roof, due to improper ventilation, or especially wet mulch up against a structure. While those problems can sustain fungus gnat infestations, house plants, especially overwatered ones, are the primary source of breeding material in

homes. Plants don't need to have standing water in them to be suitable larval development spots, just sufficiently moist. As with all flies that are found in and around the home, addressing breeding sites is of the utmost importance.

Small flies can be really hard to differentiate without the proper tools and expertise so if you are finding anything flying around in your kitchen, living room, basement, or anywhere, give us a call to come take care of it for you. ■

American Cockroaches



Of all the pest cockroaches, the American cockroach (*Periplaneta americana*) stands out for being the most reviled. This is primarily due to their large size; adults can be over two inches long, and their filthy, disgusting habits. These detested cockroaches have a worldwide distribution and go by a variety of other common names like "water-bug" and "palmetto bug", and more colorfully, the "Bombay canary." Interestingly, the name "American cockroach" isn't even apt. This pest is native to the continent of Africa and was brought over to what is now the United States on ships in the 1600s. The only thing that really matters is that the American cockroach is here to stay.

American cockroaches are primarily reddish-brown, but have a lighter colored 'shield' over their head. There are a couple other cockroach species that can easily be confused with American cockroaches (the Australian cockroach and the brown cockroach) but only the American is consistently found throughout inhabited parts of North America. Adult males and females have fully developed wings that are folded over the length of their body but are poor fliers. Occasionally, American cockroaches will make a short migration flight en masse.

Females put 14-16 fertilized eggs into a special case called an ootheca. Within a few days of forming the ootheca the female will drop it in a secluded place or 'glue' it to a suitable surface that is protected and not too far from a food source. Oothecae are brown, cylindrical, leathery in appearance, and about 1/3" long. On the 'top' it kind of looks like a zipped zipper. If you see oothecae in your home, there are (or at least were) cockroaches in the vicinity.

Once the eggs hatch, the tiny nymphs stay close to the hiding place that they share with other cockroaches. Over their development to adulthood, American cockroaches molt up to 14 times, depending on environmental conditions. Shockingly, the time for an egg to develop into an adult can take over two years. Insect are generally known for their short development times but this is not true got all species. In rare cases, adult females have been recorded living almost five years. During her lifetime, an average female American cockroach will produce 10 oothecae (160 eggs), but in extreme cases an individual has produced 90 oothecae. There are several parasitoid wasp species, notably the ensign wasp, that will attack American cockroach oothecae and lay eggs inside that will kill the developing cockroaches.

These are opportunistic pests though, and can hitch a ride inside on or in packaging or slip in through cracks and crevices during warm months. American cockroaches are closely tied to the sewer system in many cities and can make their way into homes through dried bath traps and other vulnerable entry points in drains. Once they have found their way inside they are pretty easy to please. Though they may have a preference for fermenting food, they are quite happy to eat whatever you have left out or is sitting in a trash can, including pet food.

Keep any pet food as inaccessible to pests as possible because cockroaches love it as much as your pooch.

If you see a cockroach indoors please let us know because when you spot one there are likely many more around. We can determine whether it's an American cockroach or another pest species and tailor a control strategy to get fast results for you. ■



The American Cockroach is found throughout the U.S. They are reddish brown in color and typically poor fliers. Sometimes found in residences, these insects commonly infest commercial buildings such as restaurants, bakeries, grocery stores and bars.