

PestGazette

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How to Keep Chilly Critters Out of Your Home This Winter

In many parts of the country, the cooling temperatures of fall force chilly critters to start looking for winter shelter. Unfortunately, your warm, cozy home also looks inviting to insects and animals seeking a comfy place to stay for the winter. Here are a few steps you can take now to help keep critters out of your home this winter. But even if you follow this advice, sealing all potential openings can be a daunting task. If you need help making your home winter-ready, give us a call. ■



Trim away any trees which have branches in contact with the house as ants and even wildlife love to use these to find a way into our warm homes.



Make sure that you have a chimney cap properly installed to prevent birds, rodents and wildlife from entering. Many dampers are not airtight, so there is often a nice, warm air current going up the chimney which makes things very cozy for these pests.



Look for any wood in contact with the soil near the house. This can lead to a termite infestation.



Look for signs of burrowing near the foundation or under decks. This could indicate a possible rodent or wildlife infestation



Keep garage doors closed especially after dusk. Open garage doors allow mice, rats, and wildlife into the garage.



Store pet food and birdseed in plastic bins with tightly fitted tops.



Keep all garbage in closed containers both inside and outside the house.



Seal any holes in the foundation or anywhere insects or rodents might enter. Add weather-stripping under doors to save energy and to exclude pests.

No More Fleas, Please



Fleas can be a nuisance and problem any time of year but especially as the cooler weather sets in. Fleas can be brought into your home on cats, dogs or even rodents who are trying to find a warm place to spend the winter months. Fleas are small, typically one sixteenth of an inch, reddish-brown, wingless, blood-sucking insects. Their bodies are laterally compressed, (i.e., flattened side-to-side) permitting ease of movement through the hairs on their host's body. Their legs are long and well adapted for jumping and the mouthparts of an adult flea are adapted for sucking blood from a

host. The female adult needs a blood meal prior to laying her eggs. Much of the flea problem associated with pets has been eliminated by properly applying products offered by veterinarians to pet owners. However, fleas are still out there and doing well in wildlife and rodent populations. Other pests like bed bugs, lice and mosquitoes may cause bites within a home, and therefore it is good to have a proper inspection and identification of the infestation. We recommend you give us a call so that we can provide suggestions and treatments to eliminate your flea and blood sucking pest problems.

Keep Cold-Weather Invaders Out

Cooler fall weather can be a welcomed change from the hot and humid days of summer. Unfortunately, dropping temperatures can also be a signal to many occasional invaders such as brown marmorated stink bugs, lady beetles and boxelder bugs to seek shelter in the cozy confines of your garage, attic, and walls. Many pests can be more challenging to manage once they have made their way inside your home. Stopping these insects before they move indoors can be the key to enjoying pest-free winter. Familiarize yourself brown marmorated stink bugs, lady beetles and boxelder bugs so that you are prepared to contact us at the first sign of an infestation.

Brown Marmorated Stink Bugs

Having your home overrun by some insects can really stink. Literally. Of course, we are talking about stink bugs who get their name because they can produce a fowl smelling odor when they are disturbed or crushed. While stink bugs have long been considered occasional invaders in homes and gardens, the accidental introduction of the brown marmorated stink bug into the eastern U.S. in the 1990's has given homeowners additional cause for concern. Today, this pest can be found from coast to coast.

The brown marmorated stink bug has a shield-shaped body that is typical of other stink bugs
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Call Today!
585-381-0395

CastleGuard Pest Management
94 Jefferson Ave.
Fairport, NY
14550



Asian lady beetle



Brown marmorated stink bug



Boxelder bug

Cold-Weather Invaders (continued from page 1)

bugs. Adults are about one-half of an inch long with a brown marbled-like exoskeleton. This insect becomes a nuisance pest both indoors and outdoors when it is attracted to homes on warm fall days in search of protected overwintering sites. Stink bugs do not do any structural damage to homes, and they do not sting or bite. However, their presence can be quite apparent if they are squashed or disturbed, causing them to produce their fowl smelling odor.

As air temperatures begin to warm in early spring, adult brown marmorated stink bugs emerge from their overwintering locations in search of a mate. Females then find fruit trees to lay their eggs, and die soon after. Beginning in May, nymphs emerge from eggs and feed on the fruit trees for a few months. By mid-summer, nymphs have molted into adults and disperse to new feeding locations. The search for an ideal hibernation site such as an attic or wall void peaks in late October, and by November the stink bugs stop flying and settle into the chosen hibernation site for the winter.

An effective method for managing the brown marmorated stink bug is to prevent these smelly insects from ever making it into your home in the first place. This is accomplished through various methods of exclusion. First, check all doors and windows to make sure they seal properly. Also, ensure that all screens are installed correctly and that they are in good working order. Next, check for cracks in areas such as siding, utility pipes, and behind chimneys that could give pests easy access to your home. It is important that the appropriate products are used to seal interior or exterior access points, otherwise exclusion methods may fail allowing pests to freely enter the home. Make sure to contact your trained pest management professional who is equipped to inspect and correct these issues using appropriate exclusion methods.

If stink bugs have already made their way into your home, the point of entry must be found and sealed to prevent more insects from gaining access. Additionally, professional-grade pest

control products can provide relief from exterior and interior infestations. If you find brown marmorated stink bugs in or around your home, contact us to determine the best management plan for keeping your home free of stink bugs this fall.

Lady Beetles

Lady beetles, also known as ladybugs or lady bird beetles, are a group of insects that belong to the family Coccinellidae. They are generally considered beneficial insects because both adults and immatures feed on numerous pest insects. While lady beetles are usually a welcomed guest in backyards, these insects can become unwanted invaders when large numbers of adults seek shelter in the walls and attics of homes to survive the winter. There are about 475 different species of lady beetle in the U.S., and several of these species were introduced into regions intentionally for the purpose of controlling harmful pests. Several species can become a nuisance by invading homes when nighttime temperature start to drop, but the multicolored Asian lady beetle is the most commonly encountered lady beetle throughout most of the U.S.

Asian lady beetles are oval and convex, typical of other lady beetles. Adults are slightly larger than native species, measuring about one-quarter of an inch long. The color of the wing covers can vary from mustard-yellow to dark reddish-orange, and can be spotted or solid colored depending on the individual. The key identifying character on this beetle is a dark "M-" or "W-" shaped marking on the whitish area behind the head known as the pronotum. Larvae are also larger than most other species, and are primarily black with orange stripes or spots.

Asian lady beetles complete their entire lifecycle on plants close to their primary food source, other arthropods. Females lay yellow eggs in clusters on plants, usually on the underside of leaves near colonies of aphids. Larvae emerge soon after and begin consuming hundreds of aphids per day. After only a few

weeks, the larvae enters the non-mobile pupal stage and emerges as an adult shortly after. This beetle can complete development from egg to adult in about one month, generating multiple generations per year.

Lady beetles are voracious predators of other arthropods, but they do not cause harm to humans or structures. However, they can become a serious nuisance pest during the winter months. As autumn approaches, adults fly from their summer feeding sites to find protected sites to spend the winter. Unfortunately, homes and businesses are commonly picked overwinter sites. As nighttime temperatures start to drop, usually in mid-September depending on the location, adult beetles begin migrating to structures. In areas where lady beetle populations are high, thousands of these insects can be found in and on homes. Commonly entered sites include attics, wall voids, gaps in siding, and entry points near outdoor lights.

Management strategies for the lady beetle are similar to those discussed with the brown marmorated stink bug, with an emphasis on exclusion. Any cracks or openings around doors, windows, utility pipes, or wires will need to be sealed using appropriate exclusion methods. While exclusion is effective at preventing pests from gaining entry into a structure, sealing every crack and crevice can often be impractical. Therefore, exterior barrier treatments using professional grade pest control products may be necessary to provide relief. If you find lady beetles in or around your home, call our office to determine the best treatment program for your home.

Boxelder Bugs

There are few things greater than relaxing under the shade provided from a canopy of trees. Trees also can provide the perfect branch to climb up, hang a swing, or build a fort. While many species of trees can be a welcomed addition to your backyard, some trees can be a source of unwanted pests. This is

certainly the case with several trees in the boxelder family, which are the primary food source of the boxelder bug.

Boxelder bugs are true bugs that belong to the family Rhopalidae. When fully grown, adults are about one-half of an inch long, and are mostly black with red lines that run down the body and wings. Nymphs are smaller than adults with an all-red abdomen and lack wings. Adults are sometimes confused with other true bugs such as squash bugs, milkweed bugs and leaf-footed bugs. However, the three distinct red lines that run down the body and wings of the boxelder bug distinguish this pest from these other insects.

Female boxelder bugs lay their eggs in the crevices of bark on boxelder trees in the early spring. Nymphs hatch after a few days and begin feeding on the seed pods or fruits of trees. By mid-summer, nymphs have developed into adults and begin a second generation that reaches adulthood by September. As fall approaches and nighttime temperatures start to drop, adult boxelder bugs begin migrating away from their summer feeding grounds in search of protected places to overwinter.

Although adults and immatures feed on plants, their feeding damage to fruits and ornamental trees is minimal and is rarely considered a significant problem. This insect is mostly regarded as a nuisance pest because adults will crawl on the exterior and interior of homes in search of overwintering sites. They may also produce a fowl smelling liquid that can stain fabrics and light colored surfaces if they are crushed.

Removal of those trees that boxelder bugs feed on is the most permanent solution to boxelder bug infestations. However, this solution can be expensive and may not be practical in most cases. Pest control operators have access to the latest tools in exclusion and pest management that can protect your home inside and out. If you see boxelder bugs on your property, contact your technician to manage these unwanted pests. ■