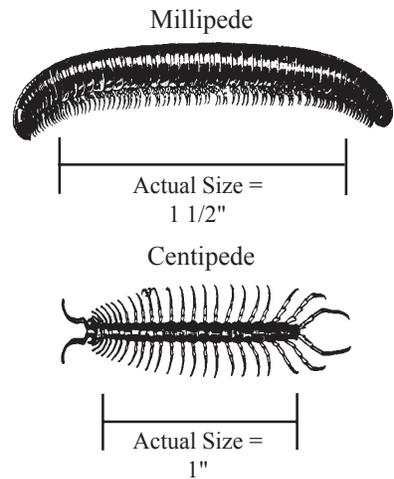
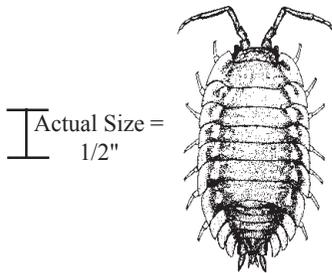
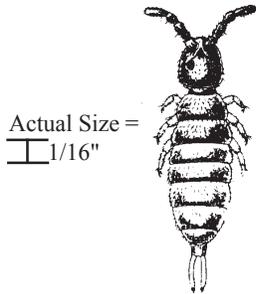


# SPRINGTAILS, SOWBUGS, AND MILLIPEDES



## GENERAL INFORMATION

Springtails, sowbugs, and millipedes are a diverse group of pests that are commonly found inhabiting a similar environment, namely, one where there is damp, decaying vegetable matter such as leaf mold. It is only when these pests, especially springtails and sowbugs, are close to human outdoor activities that they are of concern. Actually, as nuisance pests they are generally harmless and should not cause particular concern even if they occasionally enter buildings. They do not bite or sting humans.

**Springtails** (Class Insecta, Order Collembola) are tiny wingless simple insects, one-sixteenth of an inch in length or less. They are found throughout the year inhabiting moist soil situations where they are often hidden from light. They may be seen on the surface of standing water including swimming pools. The name springtail comes from the fact that most species have a spring-like appendage beneath the tip of the abdomen, which enables them to jump a few inches into the air. They may be pale grey, black, or deeply colored. They are usually only economic pests in mushroom beds or on seedlings in greenhouses.

**Sowbugs and Pillbugs** (Class Crustacea, Order Isopoda) are greenhouse and dooryard pests related to shrimps and crabs. Since they breathe by means of gills, they require moist conditions to survive and are therefore most active at night. They may be found in damp soil and leaf mold, under boards and other objects where they feed mainly on decaying organic matter. Damage is caused by feeding on seedlings and the tender parts of some bedding plants near the soil. They are oval,

segmented, mostly in shades of grey, developing to about one-half inch long and having seven pairs of legs. When disturbed, pillbugs roll up in a ball, and sowbugs scurry for cover. It takes them about a year to develop to mature adults.

**Millipedes** (Class Diplopoda) are sometimes called thousand legged worms. They have two pairs of legs on most of their many-bodied, hard segments. These creatures are slow moving, mostly under one and one-half inches (a few species are larger) and usually brownish, tan, or grey. When disturbed, they coil up and may emit an offensive protective fluid. Millipedes usually have one generation a year. Their feeding habits are similar to those of sowbugs but control is seldom warranted unless present in large numbers. **Centipedes**, which may be confused with millipedes, have one pair of legs per segment, move much faster, and are predaceous.

## PREVENTION

Remove old boards, rubbish, and other accumulations about the foundation and yard. Seal all cracks and openings through which the pests may enter the house. Keep the house dry inside and out. Keep plant growth away from windows or other openings.

\* \* \* \* \*

This information is provided to help homeowners with their pest problems. Insecticides may be purchased at nurseries, hardware, farm supply, and pet stores. If additional help is needed, contact with a licensed pest control operator is suggested.

No endorsement of trade names or products is intended nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

### PRECAUTIONS

1. Handle insecticides with care and follow instructions on the label.
2. Do not use around open flame or exposed foods, and always clean food preparation areas after the use of pesticides.
3. Store out of reach of children and pets, preferably in locked cabinets.
4. Never keep pesticides in anything other than the original container.
5. Never reuse the pesticide container to store any other materials.
6. Dispose of all empty containers by placing them in the trash can for removal to the local disposal area.



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