

# Where do fruit flies come from?

Barb Ogg  
Extension Educator

Fruit flies seem to magically appear this time of year—invading our kitchens and causing a major nuisance. Where do they come from? From ancient times, until the 19th century, people believed that some life forms arose spontaneously from non-living, primarily decaying, organic matter—an event known as spontaneous generation. Spontaneous generation was such a widely held belief, that there were even formulas “known” to produce these creatures. For example, a 17th century recipe for the spontaneous production of mice, required placing sweaty underwear and husks of wheat in an open-mouthed jar in a dark location and waiting for about 21 days. During this time, it was alleged, the sweat from the underwear would penetrate the husks of wheat, changing them into mice. We snicker at this notion today, but it wasn't until Louis Pasteur conducted a carefully controlled experiment

in 1859 that finally proved that flies and germs are produced by other flies and germs and are not spontaneously produced.

But, I digress. . . where do your fruit flies really come from? Adult flies are attracted to the yeasty smell of fermenting fruits and vegetables, and lay their eggs on overripe produce. These eggs hatch into maggots that feed on the rotting fruit. If that fruit is in your kitchen, you could be dealing with hundreds of flies in about a week.

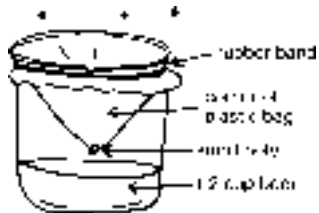
Most of you probably think that fruit flies came from the supermarket on the fruit that you buy. It's possible, but fruit flies don't like unripe produce and most supermarkets primarily sell unripe fruits and vegetables. Because fruit flies are native to Nebraska, the fruit flies in your kitchen, most likely, get inside from the great outdoors. They smell your nearly over-ripe peaches or tomatoes and are so small they can go through window screens with ease. You can also bring them inside when you bring in fruit or vegetables from the garden.

To get rid of a fruit fly problem, put produce in the refrigerator and remove fruit and vegetable waste

### Simple Fruit Fly Trap

Materials needed: jar, plastic bag, beer, rubber band

1. Pour approximately 1 inch beer into jar.
2. Place plastic bag over mouth of jar with one corner reaching down into jar.
3. Poke a small hole (no more than 1/8" diameter) in corner of bag with a pencil.
4. Secure bag around rim with rubber band or canning ring.
5. Place trap out-of-reach of children, pets.



Fruit flies will be attracted by the fermenting beer; find their way through the tiny hole in the bottom of the funnel, and not be able to find their way out.

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# Wolf spiders are “big, hairy and real fast”

Wolf spiders are among the largest spiders in Nebraska. They are common outdoors and only accidentally find their way indoors by wandering into houses and buildings by mistake. Many people who find one of the larger species of wolf spiders think that they look like small tarantulas because they are quite hairy.

Wolf spiders have eight eyes and excellent vision. Unlike many spiders that have poor eyesight and build a web to capture prey, wolf spiders do not build webs, but are active hunters. They are appropriately named because they run quickly over the ground in search of prey and powerfully pounce on their victims.

Outdoors, wolf spiders are common in most terrestrial

habitats, but are often found in areas of tall shrubs or dense grasses where their insect prey is abundant. When they are not actively searching for food, they may be found hiding under rocks or other objects. Some species dig burrows into the soil.



Wolf spider carrying spiderlings

The wolf spider mother is notable because she demonstrates a degree of maternal behavior. She attaches her large egg sac to her spinnerets (the organs at the

tip of her abdomen that make silk) and carries it around with her until the spiderlings hatch. If the egg sac is removed, she searches for it until she finds it and reattaches it. At hatching time, the mother wolf spider opens the rim of the cocoon with her mouthparts to help her spiderlings escape. After hatching, the spiderlings immediately climb on their mother's back and she carries them with her until they are partially grown.

Wolf spiders are not considered to be poisonous, although a bite may cause a reaction in certain individuals. The presence of wolf spiders in the house is particularly common in the late summer and fall and usually a result of accidental invasion.

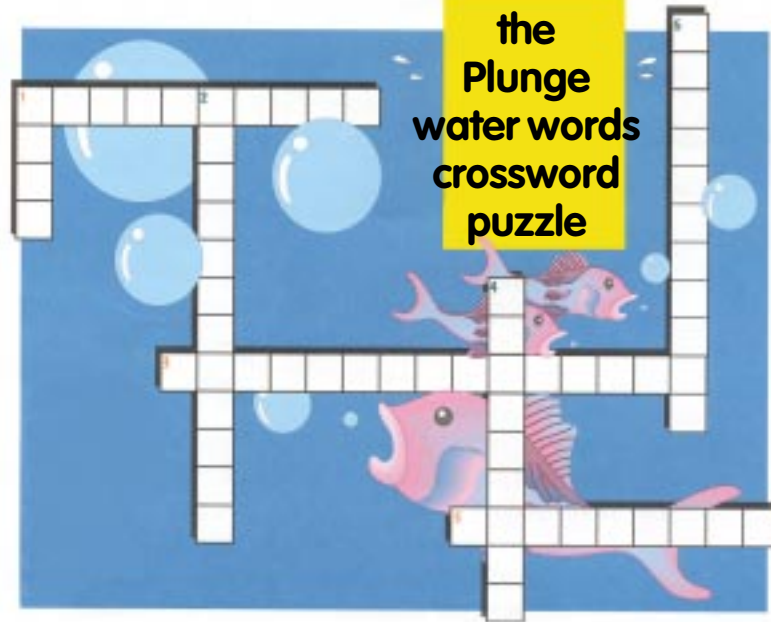
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## Environmental Focus



### Kid's Corner

Take the Plunge water words crossword puzzle



### Word Bank

- conservation
- natural resource
- reservoir
- well
- groundwater
- pollution
- water cycle

Complete the crossword puzzle using the words from the word bank.

#### Across

1. In the \_\_\_\_\_, water evaporates from oceans, lakes and rivers. Clouds form and water returns to the ground as rain, sleet or snow.
3. A \_\_\_\_\_ is something found in nature that is useful or necessary for life.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ dirties the environment.

#### Down

1. A hole dug or drilled in the ground to get water, is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
  2. \_\_\_\_\_ is the wise use of natural resources.
  4. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a place where water is collected and stored for use.
  6. Water that is found underground in the spaces between soil and rocks is called \_\_\_\_\_. It supplies wells and springs.
- Look for the answers on the back page.

# Reduce unwanted advertising mail!

Check your mail today? How many unwanted pieces did you receive? Too many? How does this happen? If you make one or more purchases from mail order catalogues, your name is added to a list and marketed to other companies that do business through the mail. As a result, you receive many, many pieces of national advertising. To remove your name from national mailing lists, write to:

Mail Preference Service  
Direct Marketing Association  
11 West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street  
PO Box 3861  
New York, NY 10163

To keep your name off the unwanted mailing lists, contact mail order companies to let them know that you do not want your name and address shared with other businesses and organizations. In this way, you still can order by mail but you will not receive unsolicited items. If you do get “junk mail,” please remember to recycle it! (ALH)



## September 20-26, 1999 Celebrate P2 Week!

### NATIONAL POLLUTION PREVENTION WEEK

This week is set aside to highlight pollution prevention and waste reduction by encouraging changed behaviors among community citizens and businesses. To participate in P2 Week, why not consider these options.

- Recycle cans, glass, newspaper, cardboard and plastic.
- Compost yard waste and kitchen garbage.
- Dispose of all household appliances, used oil, tires and cars properly.
- Buy in bulk.

- Buy products packaged in recycled materials.
- Cut open six-pack soda plastic rings.
- Repair those leaking faucets.
- Use detergents with small amounts of phosphate.
- Adopt a stream.
- Use fewer pesticides.
- Check your home for household chemicals that are toxic. Store or dispose of properly.
- Walk instead of driving or take the bus.
- Plant a tree.

During P2 Week, special activities are planned. Tours of Carol Wright, Sandhills Publishing and Duncan Aviation are available on Tuesday, September 21. A reception at the Lancaster Extension Education Center is from 12-2 p.m., Thursday, September 23. Cost is \$3.75 for lunch and a dessert. Registration for all activities required. For more information, contact Phil Rooney, Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department at 441-8644. (ALH)

## Bee or wasp problems?

Contact the extension office and ask for NebGuide 88-891, Stinging Bees and Wasps. It is one of our most popular NebGuides this time of year. (BPO)

