

Centipedes and Millipedes

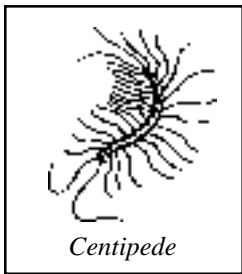
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Centipedes and millipedes are not insects because they have more than six legs, but they are closely related invertebrates. When outdoors, these invertebrates are innocuous organisms, but they may be considered pests when they share living space with us. Both of these groups of invertebrates have long, segmented bodies with either one pair (centipedes) or two pairs (millipedes) of legs on each segment. Their food preferences vary greatly.

Centipedes

Centipedes have pair of poison claws behind the head and use the poison to paralyze their prey, usually small insects. However, the jaws of centipedes are weak and can rarely penetrate human skin. The rare individuals who are bitten may experience localized swelling and pain no worse than a bee sting.



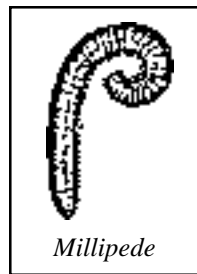
Centipede

The house centipede is found throughout the United States. This centipede can be found outside under stones, boards, or sticks or beneath moist leaf litter and other organic matter. When disturbed, centipedes move swiftly toward darkened hiding places. When they are found in homes, they are often found in moist basements, damp

closets and in bathrooms. Centipedes require moist habitats. If they are plentiful, there may be an underlying moisture problem that should be corrected.

Millipedes

Millipedes are similar to centipedes, but have two pairs of legs per body segment. Some people mistakenly refer to them as "wireworms." (Wireworms are the larval stage of a beetle that feeds on roots of plants.) Millipedes are usually brown to blackish in color.



Millipede

The elongated body is rounded, no flattened, and they have no poison claws or legs. They usually coil up when disturbed, similar to the behavior exhibited by sowbugs or pillbugs (a related invertebrate). Millipedes are usually restricted to moist places where they feed on organic matter. In the fall, they may become a nuisance because they migrate away from feeding areas and invade homes. Because they crawl along the ground, they are usually found in lower floors and basements. Once inside the home, they usually die due to desiccation, although in moist basements, they can survive longer.

Millipedes live in organic matter (leaves, mulch, piles of wood or wood chips) and other material close to the

house. Overmulching and/or overwatering in the garden can result in millipede attack on vegetable plants. Removing the organic debris or mulch materials near your home will help reduce the potential for invading millipedes.

To discourage millipedes near the house, remove mulch and dead vegetation adjacent to the house. Outdoors, you may wish to treat a 10-15 foot strip around the house perimeter with an insecticide. Do not forget to treat the exterior basement wall, window frames and door sills. Wettable powder (WP) formulations are very effective on concrete or soil because they leave a thin film of insecticide on the substrate after the liquid carrier is dry. This film attaches to the body of these arthropods as they crawl across it. Carbamate insecticides (Baygon®, Ficom®, Sevin®) are recommended for outside control of millipedes because they are fastacting. People and pets should stay off wet insecticides, but can safely walk on the yard once the insecticide is dry.

The safest and most environmentally sound way to control millipedes and centipedes already in the house is to step on them and vacuum or sweep them up. However, damp hiding places can be treated with indoor insecticides labeled for this use.

Be sure to read and follow label directions when using any insecticides.