

Fall Bugs

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The brilliant colors of Fall will soon give way to the cold and snow of Winter, some prepare for the cold by digging out the wool sweaters, others prepare for the cold by finding their way into your home.

You may have noticed a few of these invaders in your home recently. Lady Bugs, Western Conifer Seed Bugs and Cluster Flies, each make their way into homes in an attempt to winter over as adults. In nature, these insects would find a cozy spot under some tree bark, under a pile of leaves or tucked into a clump of grass, here they wait out the winter months, with hopes of emerging in the warmth of spring to lay eggs and continue their cycle of life. But why spend the winter under the bark when your home is so warm and inviting? These insects gain access to your home through cracks and crevices, around windows, doors, in the eaves and soffits of your home. To exclude them; fill and or caulk all entry points to your home.

Now that they are in, what do you do? Lady Bugs are beneficial insects, but they are no fun when they invade your home in huge numbers. Handling them causes them to emit a nasty odor, which usually protects them from their enemies. In this case, that's you. Vacuum up the lady bugs and either release them outside, or seal the vacuum bag in a plastic bag and dispose of it with the household trash. If you leave the Lady Bugs in the bag in the vacuum they will simply crawl out again.

Western Conifer Seed Bugs are frightening looking insects; they are rather large and as members of the stink bug family, also emit a nasty odor when threatened. They feed on White, Scotch, Austrian and Mugho Pine, as well as White Spruce, Douglas Fir and Hemlock. First described in the Western United States, they have been extending their range eastward and are now commonly seen in the easternmost states. There are no pesticides registered for use against this bug in New Hampshire, but since they do not usually invade in large numbers, scooping them up individually and releasing them outside to fend for themselves is an option as well as the "old fashioned" method of bug control.

As for Cluster Flies, they are often confused with House Flies. Cluster Flies are actually a parasite of earthworms. The more abundant earthworms are around a home, the more likely it is that cluster flies will become an indoor pest. Earthworms are most abundant in areas where organic matter has been piled or stored and are common in grassy areas with good soil moisture. Cluster fly adults come into homes in the fall seeking warmth and shelter. They do not reproduce in the home, as they require earthworms for the larval stage of their lives. Cluster Flies are slow moving and can be easily swatted or vacuumed up.

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