



## **EARWIGS**

### **Host Plants and Description**

Earwigs eat the foliage and flowers of many plants, including marigolds, ageratum, zinnias, dahlias, hollyhocks, lilies, chrysanthemums, roses, daylilies and tender young vegetable seedlings. They are not known to damage trees but occasionally they do become household pests. However, earwigs are also beneficial predators, eating insects, mites and nematodes, as well as algae and fungi.

Adult earwigs reach 3/4 " long, and are reddish brown with a fierce-looking set of pincers on the hind end of their bodies. Although they look nasty, earwigs are harmless to humans, and they use their evil looking pincers mostly to defend themselves from other insects.

### **Plant Damage / Symptoms**

Earwigs eat holes in foliage or flowers, and may nibble down all new growth on young seedlings. Outdoors they are present from late June to mid August, although they may live in greenhouses year round. They feed at night, and they spend their days hiding in crevices or cracks, under debris or mulch, under the bark of trees, or in sheds or houses.

### **Controls**

Other pests cause similar damage. Before attempting control determine if earwigs are really the problem. Check areas of damage at night with a flashlight to see if earwigs are actively feeding.

If they do prove to be the problem, try trapping them. Make traps from:

Flower pots loosely stuffed with hay or dry moss and inverted on stakes

Partially open matchboxes hung on stakes in the affected area

Rolled up newspapers, hollow bamboo stems, sections of pipe or garden hose

Small cans such as cat food or tuna cans filled with vegetable oil, moistened bread crumbs or beer

Gather traps in the morning and dispose of earwigs in soapy water or kerosene.

Diatomaceous earth sprinkled around problem areas will help to control earwig damage. If more control is needed, carbaryl (Sevin) is effective, but make sure not to spray flowers.

### **Control of Earwigs Indoors**

Earwigs will not lay eggs inside the home. They enter homes through cracks and crevices, seeking day-time hiding places. Caulk these areas, and add weather-stripping to doors and windows. Prune any foliage that touches the walls of the house and make sure the area next to the house is clean and dry. If stray earwigs manage to make it inside, vacuum them up.