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University of Wisconsin Garden Facts

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Provided to you by:

SOWBUGS

Phil Pellitteri-U.W. Insect Diagnostic Lab

Sowbugs and related pillbugs are harmless soil inhabiting creatures that occasionally are found in high numbers in and around the home. These hard-shelled, multi-legged, segmented isopods feed on decaying organic matter in the soil. Sowbugs often collect under flower pots, outdoor rugs, boards, in leaf litter, and in cool, damp areas such as basements and crawlspaces. Pill bugs roll up into a ball if disturbed.

Sowbug

Sowbugs live in the soil and often come out at night and crawl around. When the sun comes up they look for moist, sheltered sites and often crawl beneath door sweeps or under siding and fall into the basement. The biggest numbers outdoors are seen in damp areas with ample organic matter such as mulched flower beds, and wooded areas with accumulations of leaf litter

Control

If sowbugs come indoors, they will not survive long because of a lack of moisture. They can be vacuumed or swept up. To prevent sowbugs or pillbugs from coming inside caulk or seal around door and window frames to eliminate gaps and especially along the foundation where they often crawl up under siding. Minimize moisture sites (leaky faucets, air conditioners, broken down spouts) and consider removing organic debris such as bark mulch from the foundation as this can serve as a breeding site.

If large numbers migrate from outside consider applying insecticides outside as a barrier treatment. This can done in a 3-6 ft band along the foundation of the structure, Sevin (carbaryl) can be used, but cooler temperature makes it less effective. Products containing synthetic pyrethroids such as cyfluthrin, permethrin, bifentrin, and cypermethrin work under cool conditions. Granular materials or sprays applied with compressed air or hose-end sprayer can be used.

For more information: *Contact your County Extension Agent:*

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