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GUIDE

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Sowbugs, Pillbugs, Millipedes, and Centipedes

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Sowbugs, pillbugs, millipedes, and centipedes occasionally enter the house. However, they prefer moist areas near the top of the soil in mulched flower beds, leaf litter, grass clippings and other debris around foundations, rocks, boards, etc. Cracks between slabs, porches and in basement walls provide excellent cover.

Their presence is annoying. Dirt, trash and pieces of their dead bodies may be found along the baseboards, etc. Sowbugs occasionally damage roots or the tender stems of plants. Millipedes and centipedes rarely damage seedling plants. Sowbugs, pillbugs, and millipedes do not harm humans or other animals. Usually centipedes are too small to injure humans or animals but the very large species (4 to 5 inches long) can inflict a wound similar to a bee sting.

Sowbugs and Pillbugs

These two closely related groups of organisms are crustacians as are shrimp, crabs, and lobsters. At times, they will enter the basement and first floor of a house through cracks and crevices in the foundation and walls. Such entrance is a sure sign that considerable numbers are present under plants and in the soil immediately outside the house.

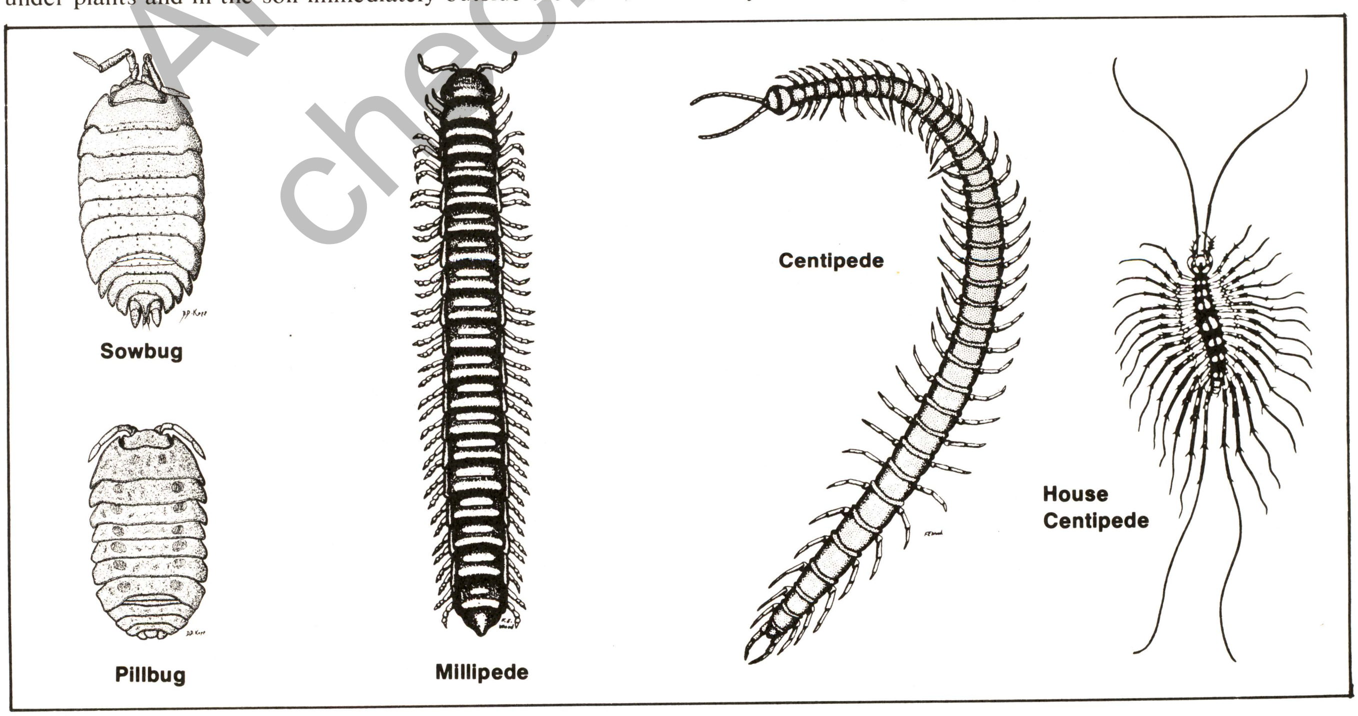
Sowbugs - Sowbugs are light gray to slate-colored with slightly enlongated bodies of up to ½ inch in length. The body is distinctly segmented. They have seven pairs of legs, two pairs of antennae and two prominent tail-like appendages.

The female retains the eggs in the brood pouch for three to four weeks until they hatch. The young may remain in the pouch for up to a month. They resemble the adults entirely except for size. Each female may produce a brood of 25 to 75 young several times a year.

Pillbugs - Pillbugs are dark gray to black and are not as flat as the sowbugs. The body is distinctly segmented with seven pairs of legs and two pairs of antennae. The abdomen does not have any tail-like appendages. Pillbugs can roll into a tight ball when disturbed. This reaction will readily distinguish them from the sowbugs. The reproductive cycle of the pillbugs is similar to that of the sowbugs.

Millipedes

Millipedes or "thousand-legged worms" have a many-segmented body, with two pairs of legs on most of the body segments. Their legs appear to ripple in waves as they move. They often curl up and remain motionless when touched.



Millipedes range in length from less than 1 inch to more than 4 inches.

Millipedes may migrate in the spring and fall, particularly in the Ozark region. The brown millipede (about 1 inch in length, dark brown with lighter stripes along the body) is the most common species in this region. They are a common problem around houses in or near densely wooded areas where the soil has a high content of organic matter or lawns have received heavy applications of compost, rotted manure or sewage disposal waste.

Other species, especially those which coil the body into a spiral, are often found in the house but in fewer numbers.

Centipedes

Centipedes or "hundred legged worms" are reddish-brown, flattened elongated animals. These creatures have many body segments with one pair of legs attached to each segment. The antennae are longer than those of the millipedes and the first pair of legs are modified into poisonous jaws located immediately below the mouth. These jaws are used to kill insects and other creatures.

Centipedes do not build up in great numbers like millipedes but occasionally crawl into houses. They may be found crawling over the floor, in closets, storage rooms, and other dark areas.

House Centipedes - The house centipede usually is not recognized as a relative of the more familiar centipedes. The body of the house centipede is slightly over an inch in length with 15 pairs of long legs. The antennae and the pair of legs on the last segment are each twice the length of the body.

House centipedes are gray colored. Their legs are ringed with dark and light bands. These centipedes are very quick and occasionally are mistaken for a long legged spider. Despite their alarming appearance, they are beneficial because they eat spiders and household insect pests. House centipedes usually are found in damp basements and other moist areas of the house.

Control Methods

Sanitation is the First Step.

Remove vegetation and other organic matter (rotting wood, clippings, etc.) from the surface of the soil in a strip 3 feet wide around the foundation. This barrier will help prevent sowbugs, pillbugs, millipedes and centipedes from entering the home. A program of continued sanitation close to the building, such as a clean up or removal of piles of rocks, boards, leaves, compost, and general refuse, will aid in control of the populations of these pests.

Make the basement, foundation, and entrances to the first floor of homes as tight as possible. Use calking compound to fill cracks around doors, basement windows, and other openings large enough for the pests to pass through. Repair cracks in the foundation and basement walls.

Control Outside the Home

Chemicals may be used in those areas where sowbugs, pillbugs, and millipedes persist in spite of sanitary measures.

Dusts—Treat the cleared strip and base of foundation with a liberal application of the following:

- Carbaryl (Sevin) - Use 5% dust.
- Diazinon - Use 2% dust.
- Malathion - Use 4 or 5% dust.

Sprays—Apply one of the following sprays to the foundation, cleared strip, and several feet out into the lawn.

- Carbaryl (Sevin) - Use 1 cup 50% carbaryl wettable powder per gallon of water. Apply 3 or 4 gallons per 1000 square feet.
- Chlorpyrifos (Dursban) - Use 3 tablespoons 25% emulsifiable concentrate in 3 gallons of water per 1000 square feet.
- Diazinon - Use ½ pint AG500 or 1 pint 25% diazinon emulsifiable concentrate in 3 to 5 gallons of water per 1000 square feet.

CAUTION: DO NOT allow small children or pets access to treated areas until after a rain or watering and the treated area has completely dried.

House Centipede Control -If house centipedes are numerous, eliminate their food source and damp areas in the house. Controlling high insect populations in the house will eliminate the food source of the house centipede. Stop water seepage, and air out damp places.

Control Inside the Home

Sowbugs, pillbugs and millipedes may not be completely controlled by measures applied outside the home. In such cases, insecticides can be applied to selected interior basement and/or ground floor areas. These areas include the junction of walls and floors; window sills, door sills and casings; and other points where they can enter.

To avoid spotting or staining finished surfaces, obtain ready-to-use household formulations containing one of the following insecticides:

- Diazinon - Indoor homeowner use is limited to a 0.5% diazinon spray solution or 0.5% pressurized household sprays.
- Chlorpyrifos (Dursban) - Indoor use is limited to a 0.5% chlorpyrifos spray solution or 0.5% pressurized household sprays.
- Propoxur (Baygon) - Indoor homeowner use is limited to ready-to-use formulations of up to 1% active ingredient for sprays including pressurized products. DO NOT use as space spray.

If centipedes persist in numbers sufficient to warrant treatment, follow the control measures listed for millipedes, etc.

Direct application of a household aerosol spray containing activated pyrethrins will control occasional centipedes, millipedes, sowbugs and pillbugs.

CAUTION: DO NOT spray any surfaces upon which food, food products, dishes or utensils will come into direct contact or where prolonged, direct contact by humans or pets may occur.

Use Pesticides Wisely and Safely

- READ, UNDERSTAND, and FOLLOW directions on the label and heed all precautions.
- Apply only where needed or justified.
- Use care when handling, mixing, or applying pesticides.
- Keep pesticides in original containers complete with labels.
- Keep pesticides out of reach of children.
- DO NOT contaminate food or dishes.
- Carefully and properly dispose of unused portions of diluted sprays and empty pesticide containers.

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