



Greenhouse Blues

As our gardening winds down, we begin to think of the potted plants we are going to overwinter in our greenhouses. In the cozy, warm, moist surroundings of the enclosure, we sometimes get uninvited guests who like the climate and also like the plants and hiding spaces we provide.

Ants, especially, like to move into the soil of the potted plants and set up house-keeping for the winter. If they have availability to food that they can use, they will even begin to breed during the winter season. How many of you have watered a stored pot with plants, only to have a bunch of small ants rush out, many times carrying larvae and pupae with them? They don't usually feed on the plants themselves, but they do become a nuisance.

Earwigs like to do a similar thing, using the greenhouse for a shelter during the winter. Any little hiding place is good enough for them, as they can curl up very snugly in quite small spaces.

Aphids can become a real problem, since they will feed on many of the growing plants you are trying to store. A close inspection, often, is probably a good idea throughout the rainy season. You know: "semper vigilans!" Caught early enough, aphids can easily be controlled with insecticidal soap.

Spiders in the winter greenhouse can be an asset. They tend to feed on any undesirable insects that get inside. Their near relatives, the spider mites, however, are extremely damaging to many stored plants. Again, a watchful eye allows you to use a dose of insecticidal soap if the characteristic webbing is found on leaves.

Pillbugs love the warm, moist conditions of the greenhouse and can increase in numbers very rapidly. They normally feed on decaying plant material, so tidying up is a must during this time.

Greenhouses can be a joy in the winter, but do require a lot of diligence to keep us and the plants happy during this time!

