

Those Pesky Pests



As we are beginning to think ahead to spring and our gardens, it is probably a good idea to prepare for the onslaught of garden and house pests. The January snow may have slowed down a few of them, but there are certainly others to take their place.

Let's take a look inside the house first. Have you checked your stored grains for meal moth larvae or beetles? Be sure to get rid of any that have signs of invasion. The best way to do this is to seal the contaminated material in a "ziploc" type bag and put it in the trash.

Have you cleaned under the sinks lately? This is a place where many pests hang out. Silverfish love it under there because it is dark and sometimes moist. Ants also will be attracted if there are any tiny food particles that didn't make it into the trash can. Ants are not active yet, but will be very soon.

Carpet beetles can be continuous breeding in your house because of the warmth. It doesn't take very long for a generation to mature and soon you have a total infestation. Check your woolens, furs, and, oh yes, even your feather dusters for larvae or adult beetles.

Houseplants can have fungus gnats infesting the soil around their roots. If you see little gnats flying around inside the house, you may want to scrutinize your indoor plants. I have even seen various species of midges and gnats flying outdoors on warm days throughout the winter. I think some of their life histories are actually completed in winter!

Mice in winter can be a perpetual problem. I always leave traps set in our cold cellar that connects to the crawl space under the house. I usually catch one or two mice per week in the winter that way. Where they get in, I haven't figured out yet! Your garage is a great place for mice in the winter. It is usually not air tight and mice can sneak through the smallest openings. They love to get into and nest in cardboard boxes being stored in the garage! They really can make a mess of things!

OK, lets look outdoors now. Soon the boxelder bugs and ladybird beetles will come out of hibernation and, yes, those of us on duty at the MG desk will have to answer a million questions about control measures when they get into the house. Remember, the easiest way to handle these two is to "suck 'em up" with the vacuum cleaner.

The earwigs and slugs will begin to be active if the weather is warm (for Oregon, that is) during this month. Remember the rolled up newspaper trick for earwigs. No you don't smack them with it, you roll it loosely and lay it out in the garden and the earwigs seek shelter in the layers of paper. It's easy then to dispatch them in any way you see fit.

As we get closer to spring, we see visions of seedlings dancing in our heads. But, lets not forget those little pests that can make the joy of gardening sometimes a chore!

