



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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Centipedes

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Centipedes are long, many legged creatures that run swiftly when disturbed. By nature they are predators that feed on insects, spiders, and other small arthropods. Their body is made up of many segments with each segment containing one pair of legs. Centipedes have fangs and can possibly bite if handled, but this rarely happens and the



The house centipede, *Scutigera coleoptrata*.

bite is not dangerous. Centipedes can live over one year, but breed slowly and are usually found in small numbers in the home.

The most common species of centipede is *Scutigera coleoptrata*, is originally from Mexico and is the only species that breeds indoors. Outdoors there are a number of species, but they rarely come indoors. House centipedes are up to 1½ inches long with up to 15 pairs of very long legs. The overall color is grayish-yellow

marked with three dark lines. Centipedes prefer damp, dark environments and are found outdoors in rotting logs, mulch, potting soil, and leaf litter. They hunt for prey at night and can become trapped if they fall into a sink or bathtub.

Control: Centipedes often scare people because of their looks, but there is no need for control. They are beneficial because they remove other arthropods in the home. They are shy creatures and are not aggressive.

For non-chemical control, reducing or eliminating moisture will help. Small sticky board traps can be placed in areas of activity to reduce numbers. Indoor sprays used for ants or cockroaches can be applied to hiding places such as crawl spaces, dark corners, and cracks and crevices to help reduce populations. Most indoor products will contain synthetic pyrethroids such as cyfluthrin, permethrin and bifenthrin.

For more information on centipedes: Contact your county Extension agent.

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References to pesticide products in this publication are for your convenience and are not an endorsement or criticism of one product over similar products. You are responsible for using pesticides according to the manufacturer's current label directions. Follow directions exactly to protect the environment and people from pesticide exposure. Failure to do so violates the law.

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A complete inventory of University of Wisconsin Garden Facts is available at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension Plant Disease Diagnostics Clinic website: <https://pddc.wisc.edu>.