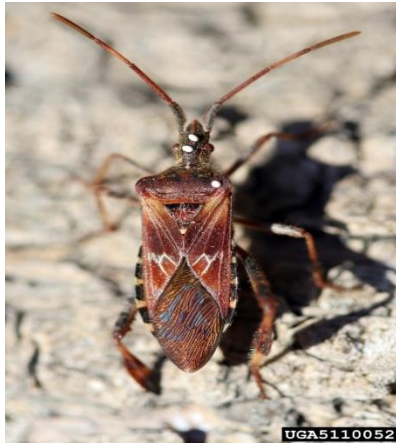


Pests to watch out for!

Ann Hazelrigg, Plant Diagnostic Clinic

Fall is the time when some outdoor nuisance pests try to get inside where it is warm. We have four main home invaders in Vermont: western conifer seed bug, brown marmorated stink bug, Asian multicolored lady beetle and the boxelder bug. None of these pests cause harm or damage to humans, pets, food items or structures.



Western conifer seed bug
David Cappaert, bugwood.org

Another home invader that can be confused with the western stink bug is the brown marmorated stink bug. This insect is shield-shaped and about 5/8-inch long with a mottled brownish grey color. The next to last (fourth) antennal segment has a white band. This insect was introduced to the U.S. from Asia in 1996 and has become a destructive fruit and vegetable pest in the Mid-Atlantic states where some homes have been invaded by thousands of this nuisance pest. In Vermont, numbers have been low, and they have been noted only as home invaders as opposed to crop pests.

The largest of the four is the western conifer seed bug, which feeds primarily on the seeds and developing cones of several species of conifers and their respective hybrids. Adults are about 3/4-inch long, brownish in color with alternating light and dark bands running along the outer wing edges on the sides of their abdomen. The insects move slowly but can fly and often make buzzing sounds when airborne. They will give off a pungent odor if handled. The insects move slowly but can fly and often make buzzing sounds when airborne. They will give off a pungent odor if handled.

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Brown marmorated stink bug
University of Minnesota Extension



Asian multi-colored lady beetle
Scott Bauer, USDA ARS, Bugwood.org

Two more colorful invaders are the Asian multicolored lady beetle and the boxelder bug. Asian lady beetles, which are slightly larger than native lady beetles, are oval, yellow to red in color and can have no spots or up to 19. Both beetles can become a nuisance on sunny south or southwest sides of houses in the fall and can inundate homes from September through April. It is not uncommon for thousands of beetles to congregate in attics, on ceilings and in wall spaces due to the inside warmth. Some inevitably find their way into living areas. In addition to the small beetles sometimes biting, they exude a foul-smelling defensive chemical that will sometimes cause spotting on walls and other surfaces.

Adult boxelder bugs are flat-backed, about 1/2-inch long, 1/3-inch wide, and dark brown with three lengthwise, red stripes on the thorax (area behind the head). Beginning around October, adults and large nymphs congregate in large numbers, primarily on the southwest side of the house (and on boxelder trees) and then begin migrating to a place conducive to overwintering. The adults overwinter by hiding in cracks and crevices in walls, in door and window casings and around foundations. Removing boxelder trees may decrease their numbers in the fall although they can fly up to two miles.



Boxelder bug
William M. Ciesla, bugwood.org

Mechanical exclusion is the best method of control to keep all these nuisance pests from entering homes. Seal cracks around doors and windows, replace damaged screens and cover fireplace chimneys and exhaust vents with number 20 (or smaller) screen mesh. Vacuuming the insects on the inside or outside of the home can diminish numbers. Insecticides are rarely warranted and should be avoided.
<https://www.uvm.edu/news/story/home-invasions-insect-kind>