

# Earwigs

**While their prominent tail-end pincers may look ferocious, earwigs are not harmful to people.** Earwigs may seriously damage seedling vegetables and chew holes in annual flowers, soft fruit and corn silks, but earwigs also play a beneficial role by feeding on aphids and other insects. Nocturnal in habit, earwigs feed at night and hide during the day in dark, cool, moist places in the yard or within flowers or vegetables. To manage earwigs, reduce hiding places and moisture, and employ a vigilant trapping program.

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## Common outdoor hiding places:

- ▶ Tight spots within flowers or vegetables, like cabbage heads, ears of corn, or rose blossoms
- ▶ Dense undergrowth of vines, ground cover and weeds
- ▶ Flower pots and other garden objects and structures
- ▶ Leaves, boards, boxes, trash and other debris
- ▶ Plastic or organic mulches

## What types of plants are damaged by earwigs?

- ▶ Seedlings of many plants
- ▶ Flowers of many plants
- ▶ Cornsilks
- ▶ Soft ripening fruit like strawberries and apricots

## What types of plants are unlikely to be damaged by earwigs?

- ▶ Woody shrubs and trees
- ▶ Mature leaves of most perennials
- ▶ Hard fruits like apples and pears
- ▶ Lawns



## To manage earwigs in the garden:

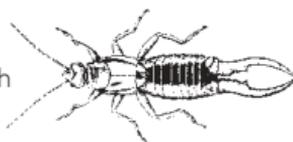
- ▶ Trap earwigs with rolled newspaper, bamboo tubes or short pieces of hose. Place these traps on the soil near plants just before dark and shake accumulated earwigs out into a pail of soapy water in the morning. A low-sided can filled with oil and a drop of bacon grease or fish oil also makes a good trap. Daily trapping will reduce earwig populations to tolerable levels.
- ▶ Remove hiding spots, especially near vegetable gardens
- ▶ Drip irrigate where possible to reduce surface moisture
- ▶ Keep earwigs out of stone fruit trees with a band of sticky substance like Tanglefoot® around the trunk and harvest fruit as soon as it ripens
- ▶ Insecticides should rarely be needed

## Inside the home:

Earwigs may seek refuge indoors when conditions outside are too dry, hot or cold. Large accumulations of earwigs can be annoying but present no health hazards. When earwigs invade your home follow these steps:

- ▶ Sweep or vacuum up invading earwigs
- ▶ Seal up cracks or other entry points
- ▶ Remove debris from gutters and around entryways
- ▶ Keep water and moisture away from structures
- ▶ Replace white outdoor lights with yellow ones, which are less attractive to insects
- ▶ Indoor application of pesticides is not recommended and may be ineffective

The adult body is about 3/4-inch long and reddish brown.



**Be sure to read product labels carefully and follow all instructions on proper use, storage and disposal of pesticides.**

Minimize or avoid the use of products that contain diazinon and chlorpyrifos – these materials are polluting our waterways.

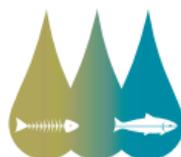
For more information contact the UC Master Gardeners at (916) 875-6913, Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. to noon, and 1 - 4 p.m., or visit the UCIPM Web site at [www.ipm.ucdavis.edu](http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu).



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