



It's here. It's here. Fall is officially here! Bring on the pumpkin spice flavored everything and changing leaves, and who could forget the migrating wolf spiders and crickets. Not exactly what you had in mind for a peaceful fall? Find out how to start preparing now to keep these invaders from making themselves at home in your home.

When the temperatures start dipping, the pests start coming in. Nobody really wants to spend the winter outdoors, and insects are no different. Some of the more common nuisance pests, or occasional invaders, include boxelder bugs, multicolored Asian Lady Beetles, millipedes, and crickets. These pests don't do any harm inside the home; they are just looking for a cozy place to spend the winter. Proper identification of the insect will assure the proper control method. Crickets hop their way into homes and provide 'music' in the night with their chirping. Commonly it's the black field cricket that migrates inside, but there are others that follow right behind.

Wolf spiders may look scary, but they are more bark than bite. These large, hairy spiders can be found both outdoors and occasionally inside the home. They are hunting spiders, so they don't spin a web or a trap, but prefer to chase down their prey. They often find their way into homes in the fall following their favorite food source, the cricket. They are not venomous, nor do they want to disturb people, but they can bite if they feel trapped or threatened. If you do get bitten, everyone will react differently to bites, just like with insect bites, so there isn't a good indicator as to if you were bitten by a wolf spider or not.

If you don't like having these unwanted guests in your home, there are a few things you can do. Sanitation and habitat modification are the first steps for controlling pests indoors. Vacuuming corners, window sills, and attic areas will help get rid of spider webs, spiders, and egg cases. The vacuum is a great, non-toxic way to suck up any unwanted guests too. Keeping areas free from clutter also makes it more difficult for the insects and spiders to find places to hide.

The saying "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" has never been more true. Discouraging occasional invaders from entering the house is going to take a little work, but it will be worth it in the long run. Start by finding and sealing up any cracks or spaces they could enter through with silicone caulk or expanding foam. Make sure that window screens are in good repair and that doors are tight fitting. Also remove any dead plant debris from window wells or near the foundation. Also take a look to see if there is a gap under doors. Place a piece of weather stripping under door so that there is no gap when the door is closed.

Pests can be discouraged from entering the house in a number of ways. The most common way is by applying an outdoor perimeter insecticide treatment. These insecticides are labeled for various pests and often times have residual effects to help protect the house for longer. Read and follow the label instructions on how and where these products should be applied. Ideally, try to apply these insecticides out from the foundation about two to three feet around the perimeter of the home, or whatever is recommended on the label. The insecticides will help to decrease the numbers of pests that make it inside the house, but don't expect it to stop all of them.

Monitor the home regularly to see what pests have made their way inside. Glue boards, or sticky traps are used to catch and hold pests as they try to move throughout the home. Be sure to use sticky boards in locations where non-target animals, like pets, won't get stuck in them. If something other than the target pest does happen to get 'caught' in the trap, use an oily material, like vegetable or mineral oil, to dissolve the sticky substance on the trap. When properly placed, these traps will allow you to see which pests are inside the home and their approximate numbers.

With a little prevention and monitoring you can ensure that you are sharing your home with wanted house guests this fall and winter.

Elizabeth Exstrom is the Horticulture Extension Educator with Nebraska Extension in Hall County. For more information contact Elizabeth at elizabeth.exstrom@unl.edu, her blog at <http://huskerhort.com/>, or HuskerHort on Facebook and Twitter.