

A Bug's Life

Fungus gnat

Family: Sciaridae or Mycetophilidae

Fun facts

- Common pest of potted plants, especially during winter months
- Associated with overwatered houseplants and moist organic debris
- Eggs laid in damp media
- Larvae feed on root hairs of plant, fungi, and organic matter in soil
- Adults are a nuisance as they fly throughout rooms, around people's faces, lights, windows, and food

Identification

Damage: Spotting, curling, wilting, and yellowing of plants

Habitat: Eggs, larvae and pupae found in upper layers of moist organic soil; larvae leave slime trails

Larva: White to translucent bodies, slender, legless, dark heads

Adult: 1/8" long or smaller, grayish-black body, distinct Y-shaped vein, dark eyes, long antennae

Management

- Reduce frequency of watering and allow soil to dry out
- Improve drainage of potting mix
- Trap adults with yellow sticky cards
- Biological control products, *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (Bti) or beneficial nematode, *Steinernema feltiae* applied to soil to kill larvae
- Systemic insecticide labeled for houseplant insect control



Fungus gnat adults are attracted to yellow sticky cards



Photos: J. Green