

How to Control Fungus Gnats

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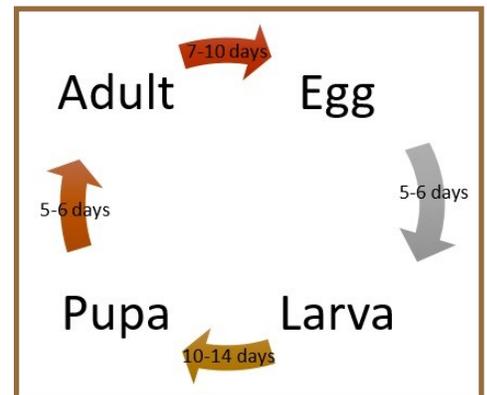


Fast Facts

- Adults do not bite. They do not have the mouthparts required to attain a blood meal. They are considered nuisance pests.
- Breed and develop in potted plants that have been overwatered.
- Fungus gnats are most common in the winter when regular watering occurs, yet plants generally take up less water.

Life Cycle

Fungus gnats undergo complete metamorphosis—egg, larva, pupa and adult, all of which take place in the top layers of soil. Adult females lay 100-150 eggs in moist potting soil and the larvae feed and develop on the fungi and organic matter. The larvae are white, slender, legless maggots with translucent bodies and dark heads. Their feeding sometimes include gnawing on the roots and stems of plants, causing considerable damage. After pupating in the soil, fungus gnats emerge as winged adults that are 1/8" long, grayish-black with long legs and antennae. Fungus gnats have many overlapping generations, particularly in



Damage

Homeowners are bothered by adult fungus gnats flying around their faces and food items. They may not readily associate the gnats with an indoor plant source. In heavy populations, larvae feeding on gnawing on the roots and stems of the plants, causing spotting, curling or plant death.

Management of Fungus Gnats

In order to eliminate a fungus gnat infestation, the life cycle must be broken. This can be done by removing the fungus in which they breed while simultaneously reducing the number of adults able to mate. The following things can be done to reduce the moisture in the topsoil: water less frequently, blow air over the soil with a fan, and change the planting medium to provide better drainage. Yellow sticky cards can be purchased at garden stores to catch flying gnats. In addition, there are biological control products such as *Bacillus thuringiensis* that can be applied to the soil to control the larvae. Look for fungus gnat on the insecticide label and follow the directions.



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Left to Right: 1. Fungus gnat larvae live in the top layer of the soil. 2. Yellow sticky traps capture flying insect pests of plants without the use of harmful chemicals. 3. Fungus gnat adults are 1/8 inches in length with long antennae and one pair of wings.