

Scavenger Beetles and Fungus Beetles

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Two families of very tiny beetles frequently wander indoors and occasionally are brought into plant clinics and Extension offices for identification and for an explanation for their activities inside homes. These two families are called the silken fungus beetles (Fig. 1), or cryptophagids (Fig. 2), and the minute brown scavenger beetles, technically known as lathridiids. They are quite small, ranging from one to two millimeters in length, (about 1/16 inch) and appear elongated. Coloring ranges from brown to black. Their habits enable their reputation as household nuisance pests; as scavengers in their adult stage, they wander through the home. The silken fungus beetles feed on fungi, decaying vegetation, and similar materials, although some species may infiltrate the nests of insects such as bumble bees or wasps. Similarly, the minute brown scavenger beetles feed as scavengers, and the adults and larvae of most species live in moldy materials, such as stored food and decomposing plant material. Suspected areas of breeding within a house range from vegetative debris or scum buildup in the bottom of garbage cans, mold or mildew in the grout of bathroom tiles, to the mold and organic buildup in the track of sliding glass windows.

Management

Management basically involves prevention- i.e. once you notice these beetles and have them identified, one should look for places where they might breed and subsequently clean them up. Simply spraying adults with a registered household insecticide when adults are noticed is not an effective solution. While these materials may knock down flying or walking adults, they are not directed at breeding sites. Therefore, spraying provides only temporary relief. Sanitation and elimination of breeding sites are necessary components for control.

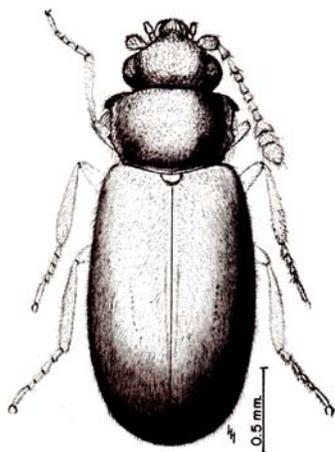


Fig. 1. Silken fungus beetle.
From Hatch's Beetles of the PNW.

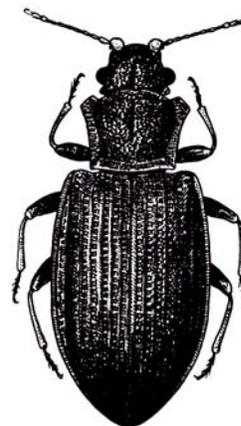


Fig. 2. Minute brown scavenger beetle.
From Hatch's Beetles of the PNW.