

Seed Bugs in Homes

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Seed bugs are representatives of the family Lygaeidae in the order Hemiptera (true Bugs). They are sucking insects armed with stout plant-piercing mouthparts. Many are crop pests (e.g. chinch bugs) and many are feeders on seeds and flowers of various weeds and native plants. As a group, seed bugs are not particularly important in the home garden and landscape. Seed bugs, however, can be serious home invaders in the fall. Several other insect also invade homes in the fall, (i.e. leaf-footed plant bug, sage bug), but seed bugs are probably the worst. Attracted to homes, (possibly by lights or warmth) in early to late fall, the population increases in alarming numbers. While they do not harm anything in the home, seed bugs become a nuisance in that some may give off an objectionable odor and some may occasionally bite-not to mention the negative social attitude of visible “bugs in the house.” Seed bugs can enter homes in a variety of ways, through vent screens, thresholds of doorways, gaps in window and around door framing, with firewood, etc. Their presence often peaks again in spring (usually at windows) when they try to escape to the outside. Several of these bugs are shown below in Figures 1-8.

Management:

Household chemicals are often ineffective. Vacuuming seed bugs and disposing them to outside garbage cans is about the most effective means available. For long-term prevention, bug proofing the home (closing off the easily accessed entry ways for seed bugs) is strongly advised.



Fig. 1. Leaf-footed bug.
Author unknown.



Fig. 2. Box elder bug.
By A.L. Antonelli.



Fig. 3. Lygus bug.
By A.L. Antonelli.



Fig. 4. Stink bug.
By A.L. Antonelli.



Fig. 5. Sage bug. By K. Grey.



Fig. 6. Shield bug. By K. Grey.



Fig. 7. Chinch bug. By K. Grey.



Fig. 8. Squash bug and nymphs.
By R. D. Akre.