

## Centipedes

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Centipedes (Fig. 1) are arthropods related to insects in the class Chilopoda. While superficially resembling millipedes, the two classes actually reveal striking differences. Centipedes are very fast moving and flat, whereas millipedes move slowly and appear round or boxy in cross-section. Centipedes have a pair of poison jaws that assist them in overcoming prey. Hence they are predators and are considered beneficial. Millipedes are largely scavengers on decaying plant material. Another difference: Centipedes exhibit a single pair of legs on each body segment, while millipedes have a single pair on the thorax, but two pairs of legs on each abdominal segment. Centipedes can be quite variable in size and may reach several inches long. However, our more common species measure only about an inch.

Centipedes are found in many places but are usually found in areas where they are protected, such as in the soil, under bark, or in decaying stumps or logs. Centipedes overwinter as adults; eggs are usually laid in summer in the soil.



**Fig. 1. A centipede. By R.D. Akre**