



# Earwigs

**While their prominent tail-end pincers may look ferocious, earwigs are not harmful to people.**

Earwigs may seriously damage seedling vegetables and chew holes in annual flowers, soft fruit, and corn silks, but earwigs also play a beneficial role by feeding on aphids and other insects. Nocturnal in habit, earwigs feed at night and hide during the day in dark, cool, moist places in the yard or within flowers or vegetables. To manage earwigs, reduce hiding places and moisture, and employ a vigilant trapping program.

## Should you be concerned about earwigs in your garden?

- Yes, if you are growing vegetables, herbaceous flowering plants, sweet corn, or plants with soft fruits like strawberries and apricots.
- No, if your garden is primarily lawn, trees, and woody ornamentals or native plants.

## Reduce outdoor hiding places:

- Eliminate dense undergrowth of vines, ground cover and weeds around vegetable and flower gardens.
- Prune away fruit tree suckers.
- Remove leaves, boards, boxes, trash, and other debris from planting areas.
- Move flower pots and other garden objects and structures that can harbor earwigs.
- Check plastic or organic mulches and remove them to limit earwig numbers.

## Trap earwigs until they are gone!

- Trap earwigs with rolled newspaper, bamboo tubes, or short pieces of hose. Place these traps on the soil near plants just before dark, and shake accumulated earwigs out into a pail of soapy water in the morning. A low-sided can filled with oil and a drop of bacon grease or fish oil also makes a good trap. Daily trapping will reduce earwig populations to tolerable levels.

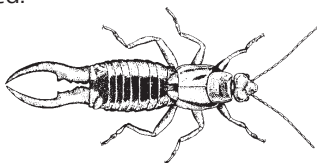
## Other ways to reduce earwig problems:

- ▶ Drip irrigate where possible to reduce surface moisture.
- ▶ Keep earwigs out of stone fruit trees with a band of sticky substance like Tanglefoot, around the trunk, and harvest fruit as soon as it ripens.
- ▶ Insecticides should rarely be needed.

## Inside the home:

Earwigs may seek refuge indoors when conditions outside are too dry, hot, or cold. Large accumulations of earwigs can be annoying but present no health hazards. When earwigs invade your home follow these steps:

- ▶ Sweep or vacuum up invading earwigs.
- ▶ Seal up cracks or other entry points.
- ▶ Remove debris from gutters and around entryways.
- ▶ Keep water and moisture away from structures.
- ▶ Replace white outdoor lights with yellow ones, which are less attractive to earwigs.
- ▶ Indoor application of pesticides is not recommended.



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Use **NON-CHEMICAL** methods & **LEAST TOXIC** pesticides. **WHY?** Runoff from around your home and garden carries water containing pesticides that pollute our streams, rivers, lakes and oceans.

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Learn more about San Diego regional water quality at: [www.ThinkBlueSD.org](http://www.ThinkBlueSD.org) & [www.ProjectCleanWater.org](http://www.ProjectCleanWater.org).  
For more pest information visit the University of California IPM website at: [www.ipm.ucdavis.edu](http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu) or the UCCE Master Gardeners at: (858) 694-2860, Mon - Fri, 9 am to 3 pm

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