



Millipedes

Eric Day, Manager, Insect Identification Laboratory

DESCRIPTION: Millipedes are slow-crawling arthropods with two sets of legs on each body segment. They range in length from 1 to 4 inches (2.54 – 10.16 cm). The body is long, cylindrical or slightly flattened, and often dark brown. When touched, they may curl up tight like a coil and remain motionless.



Millipedes on glue board. Gary Alpert, Harvard University, Bugwood.org



Greenhouse millipede. Joseph Berger, Bugwood.org

HABITAT: Millipedes prefer damp, dark locations with abundant organic matter for food. Around houses, areas that provide good millipede habitat include piles of grass clippings, a wooded lot close to the house, compost piles, excessive mulch built up next to the house, and similar places.

LIFE CYCLE: Millipedes lay eggs in the spring and populations continue building during the summer. Under good conditions with adequate food and habitat, populations can become very large. Changes in the habitat, such as excessive moisture, lack of food, or too little moisture, may cause populations to disperse. Millipedes occasionally cause problems around Virginia in the summer and fall.

TYPE OF DAMAGE: May infest a basement and other ground-level areas of a house in the fall where their presence is objectionable. Millipedes do not bite or sting.

CONTROL: Rake and reduce mulch and excess grass clipping near the house. Correct any drainage or moisture problems outside of the house and in basements or other damp areas inside the house. Millipedes inside the home can be vacuumed or swept up. Insecticides are

only partially effective but will help in severe situations with excessive millipedes in the house. Looking for the source of the millipedes may be useful, but may not always help alleviate the problem. Populations of millipedes may build to large enough numbers that the habitat becomes overcrowded and thousands of them migrate into other areas.

INTERESTING FACTS: Sometimes millipede numbers become so excessive that they swarm over mulched flower beds and invade basements and other ground-level rooms in houses. At times there can be thousands of millipedes moving across lawn areas and into houses.