



Extension FactSheet

Entomology, 1991 Kenny Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1000

Daddy-Long-Legs

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Daddy-long-legs, also known as harvestmen, are very commonly confused with spiders due to their general appearance and eight legs. However, these tan to brown creatures belong to the order Opiliones and are not spiders, all of which belong to the order Araneae (see HYG-2060, "Spiders In and Around the House," <http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/2000/2060.html>). Although they are close relatives of spiders, daddy-long-legs do not bite humans, and they are not poisonous (they lack venom glands). They do not construct webs.

Identification

Daddy-long-legs have eight very long, slender legs, although some species have shorter legs. They have an oval, compact, small body (1/16 to 1/2 inch long) that is held well above the ground by the thread-like long legs. Their body appears to be a single unit because the cephalothorax (combined head and thorax) and abdomen are broadly joined (no narrow waist), whereas spiders have a constriction between the cephalothorax and abdomen. Daddy-long-legs should not be confused with cellar spiders, which are found in cobwebs in dark, damp basements, cellars, and crawl spaces. Although cellar spiders have long legs, their body has a constricted waist (see HYG-2060).

Life Cycle and Habits

Eggs are deposited individually deep into the soil and they hatch the following spring. During the fall, large numbers of harvestmen often are seen clustered together. Because groups are observed at harvest time, they were named accordingly,

harvestmen. Adults usually do not survive in northern climates where freezing occurs.

Daddy-long-legs usually are inactive and hidden during the day, then at sunset, they begin to wander about searching for food. Many Opiliones feed on live insects, especially aphids. Other species feed on dead insects or plant juices. Harvestmen commonly live among plants or on tree trunks.

Daddy-long-legs are rarely encountered in living areas of a building, but are more often found in crawl spaces, basements, and outbuildings. They often rest on buildings—on the walls, under the eaves, or in windowsills.

Control

Daddy-long-legs are not harmful to humans, but some people consider them to be a nuisance pest. A vacuum is useful to physically remove daddy-long-legs indoors. Outdoors, use a water hose or broom to remove clusters of daddy-long-legs. An appropriately labeled insecticide may be applied outdoors to areas where they congregate. Wettable powder and micro-encapsule formulations work well.

To minimize the number of daddy-long-legs near a building, reduce outdoor lighting because lights attract the insects that they eat. Where outdoor lights are desired, use sodium lights with a low wattage, as they attract fewer insects. Reduce mulch to less than a 2-inch depth because mulch and dense plantings afford habitat for daddy-long-legs and their insect prey. Repair leaking pipes and direct downspouts away from the foundation to keep the area adjacent to the building as dry as possible. Seal and caulk around vents, pipes, and windows where daddy-long-legs and insects can creep inside.



Class: Arachnida
Order: Opiliones
Common name: Daddy-long-legs or harvestmen

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