



Western Conifer Seed Bug

The Western Conifer Seed Bug (WCSB) is an intimidating-looking insect that moves into homes in late fall to take shelter. Although it does not bite or sting, as a member of the stink bug family, it often releases an offensive odor when handled — part of the insect's defensive strategy. In flight, the adults make a buzzing sound like a bumblebee.



Description and Life Cycle

The adult WCSB is a dull brownish color, about $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch long, with a flattened leaf-like expansion on the hind legs and a faint white zigzag stripe pattern across the midpoint of its upper surface. When an adult insect takes flight, it lifts its wings to reveal bright yellow-orange areas on its back.

In spring the bugs move back outdoors to nearby coniferous trees to feed on the developing seeds and early flowers, using their piercing-sucking mouthparts to pierce the scales of conifer seeds and suck out the seed pulp. The list of host plants includes white pine, red pine, Scotch pine, Austrian pine, Mugho pine, white spruce, Douglas fir and hemlock. Because these species commonly appear in home landscapes, the bugs may take shelter for the winter in nearby homes and other buildings.

Females lay rows of eggs on needles of the host trees. The eggs hatch in about ten days and the young nymphs then begin to feed on tender cone scales and sometimes the needles. The nymphs are orange and brown, becoming reddish-brown to brown as they develop. Nymphs pass through five stages and reach adulthood by late August. Adults then feed on ripening seeds until cold weather arrives and the insects begin seeking overwintering quarters.

Control

If these seed bugs are a problem in your area, be sure to screen attic or wall vents, chimneys and fireplaces so you block their points of entry. Eliminate or caulk gaps around door and window frames and soffits, and tighten up loose-fitting screens, windows or doors to prevent these insects from getting into your home.

New Hampshire currently has no pesticides specifically registered for control of WCSB. If large numbers of these insects do invade your home, vacuum or sweep them up and put them back outside.

Reviewed by Dr. Stanley Swier, UNH Extension Entomology Specialist 7/01

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