



## Fruit Flies, Vinegar Flies, and Pomace Flies

Family: Drosophilidae



*Fruit fly (adult).*

Photo by M. El Damir, Pest Management; [Bugwood.org](http://Bugwood.org)



*Larvae (maggots).*

Photo by W. Cranshaw, Colorado State University; [Bugwood.org](http://Bugwood.org)



*Vinegar fly (adult).*

Photo by J. Berger; [Bugwood.org](http://Bugwood.org)

### Injury and Nuisance

In houses the flies are found around overripe fruits and vegetables, especially when they begin to ferment. They may also be attracted to bread or other baked goods containing yeast, and to beverages including fruit juices, soda pop, beer, and to vinegar. On occasion you may see one on a moist wash cloth or sponge near the sink getting a drink of water. They can be annoying flying around, but they do not bite.

### Description

The flies are relatively small, 3-4 mm in length, and brownish to yellowish in color. Many species have red eyes. They generally are found around decaying vegetables and fruits. The larvae are seldom seen, but occur inside the decaying food and are whitish in color and wormlike in appearance.

### Life History

Several species of this group have been used in studies of genetics and heredity by scientists because of the ease in culturing them and their short life span.

Eggs are deposited by the adults on the surface of the soft food on which the larvae will feed. The eggs hatch and the maggot-like larvae begin to feed. The larvae transform into puparia while adhering to some relatively dry surface near the food source. A few days later the adult flies emerge, at first light in color but on exposure to air, the color darkens. The life cycle can be completed in 10 days when temperatures are in the mid to upper 70's; at 68°F it may take 15 days.

### Management

The discovery and removal of the breeding site is usually necessary to eliminate these insects. A bowl of fruit or ripening tomatoes is the common source. A few overlooked sources in houses may include: small quantities of milk, soft drinks, catsup and the like left in the bottoms of bottles, damp dirty dish cloths or floor mops stored away in a closet, home-canned foods that may be fermenting, cider and fruit juices. Check vegetable and fruit storage bins as well to be sure there was nothing overlooked. Fermenting and decaying food items should be discarded.

Adult flies may be present for a few days even after the source of them is removed. Remember to discard garbage regularly and to wash out garbage containers if spills occur in them.

If desired, a simple trap\* can be made using a jar and funnel. To make a paper funnel, roll a piece of paper into a wide cone and tape it so it has a small opening at the bottom, of less than a quarter inch or just a few millimeters. In the jar, put any one of the following as bait: a bit of ripe or over-ripe banana sprinkled with yeast, a piece of banana peel, part of a ripe peach or tomato, etc. Place the funnel into the jar so that the tip does not touch the bottom of the jar or the material, and use tape to seal the funnel to the jar. Check the trap daily for adults, and kill or discard them or release them outdoors. An easy way to kill the flies is to place the trap in the freezer overnight; the funnel can be covered, folded over (if paper) or the trap can be enclosed in a bag, to prevent any flies from escaping before they have frozen. The bait material in the trap should be replaced every few days, to prevent new larvae from developing.

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