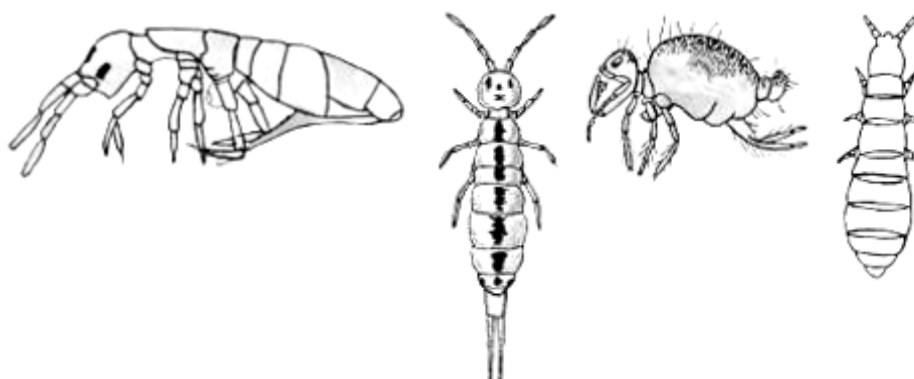




Springtails

Order: Collembola



Description

Springtails (Collembola), are very small insects, often less than 2 mm in length (0.04 to 0.1 inches) that are very common and abundant, with nearly universal distribution in moist soil. Because of their small size and somewhat concealed habits, they are seldom seen.

The name springtail refers to the fact that these insects have a forked appendage on the underside of the back of the abdomen that can be moved quickly away from the body usually causing the insect to spring into the air appearing to "jump." Springtails vary in color, but many are whitish or gray, allowing them to blend in with their surroundings.

Problem & Management

Springtails are occasional invaders or nuisance pests. They are normally found outdoors, especially in woodlands, in moist habitats such as in soil or leaf litter, on moist stones, patio blocks or sidewalks, and sometimes are found floating on water. They feed on algae, fungi, and decayed vegetation.

When springtails get into buildings they may be found in damp places such as kitchens, basements, bathrooms, around drains, on the floor near patio doors, wet walls, or in the soil of potted plants. Moisture is critical for the survival of these insects.

The moist habitat springtails require is a key consideration for managing these insects. Lower humidity will make the habitat undesirable, and eliminating moisture will greatly reduce populations. Airing a room on dry days on a regular basis may be sufficient in some situations, but if needed, a fan may be used to keep air moving or a dehumidifier may be used to help reduce humidity.

Keep ground-level entrances and window wells free of decaying leaves and debris. Damp leaves, mulches, or other moisture retaining materials near the foundation walls of homes or buildings may need to be pulled back or removed if springtails persist. It is often suggested that one leave a border of 12 to 18 inches around the foundation of homes with no vegetation or mulch, so that it stays dry.

Houseplants should not be allowed to stand in water (empty saucers if water stands in them) and may be repotted in sterile soil if the insects persist. Allowing the soil to dry out usually eliminates them.