

Woodlice



Garden Woodlouse

Advice to Householders

Introduction

There are about thirty-five species of woodlice in Britain, and some of these are of horticultural or agricultural significance, since they eat and damage plants.

Some woodlice come indoors, especially during the cooler autumn and winter weather, and of these the commonest by far is the garden woodlouse (*Porcellio Scaber* Latreille).

Characteristics

All species of woodlice live in damp areas, and those species commonly found in the garden are usually associated with dead or rotting vegetation beneath stones, flower pots and other types of cover.

The sexually mature woodlice mate, and the female commences to produce a variable number of eggs, usually up to about 150. These are contained in a brood pouch within her body until the young have hatched, when they are then released into the environment.

The young first-stage woodlouse is white and up to about 2mm in length. A succession of skin moults allows the young woodlouse to grow, eventually producing a seventh pair of legs (the first two stages have only six pairs of legs). It may take up to a year for the woodlouse to achieve full size, but this is greatly dependent on food supply and temperature. However the woodlice become sexually mature from about half size onwards. In Britain, it is common for most of the species of woodlouse to have only one generation per year.

Ingress to homes

The species of woodlice which occasionally enter houses are entirely casual visitors, searching usually for some protection from the onset of cold weather, and perhaps being encouraged by the build up of vegetation and other favourable niches immediately outside the house.

They are capable of a small amount of chewing damage to plant leaves, but basically are completely harmless. If disturbed, woodlice naturally curl up into a ball and one species, known as the common pillbug, *Armadillidium Vulgare* (Latreille), is known particularly for this habit.

Control

Control of woodlice in a room may be achieved by simply cleaning, as they do not breed indoors. Improved proofing by sealing potential entry points from outside should be attempted and, to help prevent further invasion from adjacent garden etc., rubbish and other potential refuges should be removed.

An insecticidal barrier of a residual dust or spray (available from garden centres or hardware stores), may also help prevent further immigration into damp areas which cannot be sufficiently dried to discourage the presence of woodlice.

Where do I get further information?

For further information on the Pest Control Service of East Lindsey District Council, please contact:

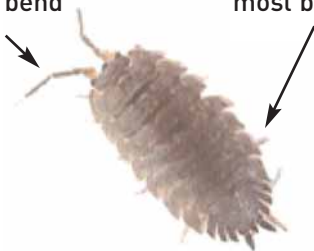
The Pest Control Section on **(01507) 601111**, or write to:

**The Pest Control Section
East Lindsey District Council
Tedder Hall,
Manby Park,
Louth,
Lincolnshire,
LN 11 8UP**

GARDEN WOODLOUSE

Three segments after sharp bend in antenna

One pair of legs on most body segments



Overall length about 15mm. Slate grey in colour and very flattened. Can roll into a tight ball when disturbed. Known in the USA as pillbugs.