

Centipede

Contact: Eric Day, Manager, Insect Identification Laboratory

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Class: Chilopoda

SIZE: Slightly over 1 inch (25.4mm)

COLOR: Reddish brown



DESCRIPTION: Centipedes are reddish-brown, flattened, elongated arthropods with one pair of legs attached on most of their body segments. The first pair of legs is modified into poisonous jaws located below the mouth to kill insects. Their antennae are longer than those of millipedes. Centipedes feed on live insects and other small animals. They do not damage plants.

HABITAT: Commonly encountered in damp basements in the fall.

LIFE CYCLE: They overwinter as adults and lay eggs during the warm months. Usually eggs are laid in the soil and are protected by adults. A few species give birth to living young.

TYPE OF DAMAGE: Nuisance in household and basement. They feed on small insects such as cockroaches, clothes moths and house flies; do not damage food supplies or household furnishings. If crushed, they may bite, causing some pain and swelling.

CONTROL: Controlling these pests should start with reducing the moisture and humidity in the basement, then using household sprays.

INTERESTING FACTS: Centipedes sometimes live up to six years.

Visit [Virginia Cooperative Extension](http://www.ext.vt.edu/departments/entomology/factsheets/centiped.html)