

# Boxelder Bugs

by Lyn Chimera

It seems to be a good year for boxelder bugs. There have been calls on Master Gardener Hotline so that's always a heads up.

Adults are ½ inch (13mm) long, narrow black bugs with red markings. (Photo 1) The bottom side of the abdomen (body) is red with some black markings. Nymphs are much brighter and redder with black markings. (Photo 2) Nymphs develop quickly into adults and there is a second generation each summer, so there are often both adults and nymphs found in large migrating groups.

Boxelder bugs are 'true bugs', often confused with squash bugs and milkweed bugs so look for the three red lines on the pronotum (between the head and the body, on the top side of the bug).

Luckily boxelder bugs are basically nuisance bugs. They don't seriously damage plants or bite but have the habit of gathering in large groups in fall on the sunny south sides of light colored buildings, trees and other surfaces. They are looking for a warm dry place to spend the winter and can find their way into homes through small cracks or on plants, firewood, etc. Once in the house they don't eat, just find a warm dry place to spend the winter. When it starts to warm up they come out to find a boxelder tree to lay their eggs.

The droppings of the boxelder bug can stain walls both inside and out. When squashed they

leave a staining, smelly mark. For this reason, it's best to use a vacuum and discard the bag. The best way to prevent them coming in the house is fill any cracks, holes in screens etc.

For more info and excellent photos go to: <https://extension.psu.edu/boxelder-bug>  
<https://monroe.cce.cornell.edu/environment/invasive-nuisance-species/boxelder-bugs>



Photo by William Ciesla

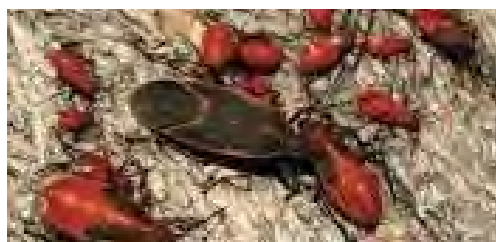
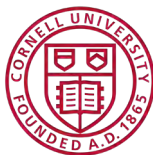


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