

May 21, 2015 (revised)

Factoids

- Have a few hundred, not 1000 legs
- Many species emit a strong odor
- Do not harm homes, plants, food, or spread disease
- “Migrate” under high moisture weather conditions

Management

- Best long-term defense is block home entry and clean up habitat outside
- Turn outdoor lights off at night
- Sweep up millipedes inside your home
- Vacuuming millipedes indoors may discharge objectionable odors into the air
- Pesticide treatments inside the home do not help
- Pesticide treatments outside might help



Palm Beach County
Board of County Commissioners

University of Florida/Palm Beach County Cooperative Extension
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Millipedes

You may have noticed large numbers of millipedes seemingly invading homes and businesses this year. These dark, rounded, worm-like looking creatures often curl up into a coil when disturbed. They periodically undertake what is sometimes referred to as “migration” during our southern Florida rainy season. It is not well understood why these large migrations occur. However, when they do, thousands of these nocturnal insects may travel together. During the day they mostly take refuge in moist areas like mulch, lawn thatch,



Yellow Banded Millipede.
Photo: UF Schall

Managing Millipedes

Heavy migrations that sometimes occur during wet conditions are nearly impossible to stop. If large quantities of insecticides are repeatedly applied, affected landscapes and structures would still likely be overrun by the creatures. Use of unnecessary pesticides can also adversely affect treated and potentially surrounding areas. The first, and probably best long term solution is to clean up as much organic litter and other debris in your yard as possible. Reducing the organic matter may help dry out the continually moist areas millipedes prefer. Diverting water away from buildings and avoiding over-watering landscapes also helps. Over-watering

leaf litter, shady yard corners, under boards, in potted plants, etc. Millipedes do not cause damage to plants or homes and feed on decaying or rotting organic material like mulch or lawn thatch. Some millipede species may also be attracted by night lighting. Millipedes, like centipedes, are not technically insects, although they are often referred to as insects or “worms.” Each female can deposit up to a few hundred eggs, from which young millipedes emerge. They undergo incomplete metamorphosis, meaning 8 or 9 younger life stages that look somewhat like smaller versions of adults. They molt, shedding their exoskeleton (skin) each time to make room for larger bodies. The name millipede means 1000 feet, but most only have a few hundred legs. Millipedes are not harmful to humans or animals, unlike centipedes which can inflict

landscapes also can cause plant disease, fertilizer loss and other problems.

Seal cracks or openings into buildings with weather stripping or caulking when possible.

If pesticides are used, try to create chemical barriers around your home that reach about 10 to 15 feet into the landscape. Appropriate liquid insecticides will give good penetration into lawn thatch and mulch if applied with enough water. However, they may not last long on the surfaces that millipedes travel on from untreated surrounding areas. Granular insecticides may stay on surfaces longer than liquids and provide a bit more extended control of milli-

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painful venomous wounds from modified front legs. Another way to tell the two apart is that millipedes have two legs on each side per body segment, and centipedes only have one. Frequently, millipedes emit smelly protective compounds from pores along the sides of their bodies.

Many of the millipede complaints we receive in the Palm Beach Extension office are for those that have entered homes and structures. Millipedes typically dry out and die within a day or two once inside due to lack of moisture. They do not bite, sting, transmit diseases or damage food, wood or fabrics. They are really just a nuisance pest.



Photo: UF Schall

pedes traveling across. Make sure insecticides have landscape planter beds and lawns on the label for safe and legal use. Always follow label directions. Use insecticides containing at least one of the following:

- Bifenthrin
- Deltamethrin
- Cyfluthrin
- Carbaryl
- Lambda-Cyhalothrin
- Permethrin



Photo: UF Holly Glenn

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