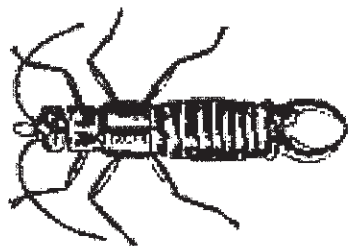


Fact Sheet 01-41

EARWIGS

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Earwigs look alarming with pincers at their hind end and bother even seasoned gardeners who normally have an attitude of "live-and-let-live". The most common earwig problems gardeners and homeowners notice are damage to developing seedlings and flowers, earwigs coming out of ripening fruit, or earwigs scurrying away from compost or piles of garden litter.

Earwigs are glossy brown, somewhat flattened insects ranging in size from ½ to 1" in length. Their most distinctive feature is a rather formidable set of "pincers" or forceps, extending from the tip of the abdomen. The forceps of males are larger and more distinctly curved than those of females. They might be capable of giving a good pinch, but it is unlikely.

Female earwigs use these forceps to guard their eggs and newly hatched young from other insect predators. Earwigs live about a year with a few females from the previous fall surviving the winter to lay up to 60 round white eggs in small clusters in the upper few inches of soil or debris. They may have two batches of eggs, one in spring and another in summer. They overwinter as adults under bark, garden debris, rocks, and boards. Young earwigs are similar to adults in structure and habits. Earwigs may be winged or wingless, but they rarely fly.

There are 22 known species of earwigs in North America, 12 of which have been introduced from the tropics and Europe. The Nevada Department of Agriculture's insect collection lists four species of earwigs, three of which –*Labidura riparia* (Pallus), the dainty ring-legged earwig; *Euborellia annulipes* (Lucas); and *Euborellia cincticollis* (Gerstaecker)—are most common in southern Nevada. In northern Nevada the most prevalent is the European earwig, *Forficula auricularia* (L.), which is primarily a garden dweller although sometimes it wanders into homes looking for a cool moist place to live.

Earwigs are nocturnal, preferring damp cool places or hiding in organic mulch, in crevices, under bark, and in garden debris. They will eat almost anything including other