

# Oregon State University Extension Urban Entomology Notes

## Box elder bugs

*biology and control  
information for  
homeowners*

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Box elder bug - note red markings on wings

For some unfortunate homeowners box elder bugs are a yearly invasion despite the fact that they cause no damage whatsoever. They will not structurally harm your home, they will not harm you and they don't breed indoors. They can be a real nuisance, however, when they gather in large numbers around the house. If they get indoors they can also "spot" interior furnishings with their droppings.

*What to do:* Unfortunately we don't have any permanent solutions to offer. However, there are a few things that will help. Caulk openings and cracks around doors and windows and repair window screens to deny the insects an entry. In extreme cases have a pest control company apply a residual insecticide to exterior wall(s) in the fall where the bugs are congregating - this will tend to discourage them from landing. Insecticides are not very effective after the weather turns cold, or in the spring.

Box elder bugs are attracted to rough surfaces and tall buildings so two-story houses get more attention from these critters. They also favor houses with large trees immediately adjacent to the structure.

Bear in mind that as bad as they are box elder bugs will only be around until the weather gets cold - so the best solution may be to ignore them until they go away.

The box elder bug is a medium-size insect, mostly black with distinctive red markings on its back, along the wing margins. In the fall, large numbers of adult insects leave nearby maple trees, on which they developed all summer, and seek a protected area to spend the cold winter months.

If they gain entry to the building through cracks or other openings they may remain indoors all winter if allowed. They will not breed indoors, so there is no danger of starting an "infestation". Their preferred hosts are box elder and other maples.

FALL - adults leave maple trees, congregate, seek warm, dry place to spend winter months. WINTER - adults inactive. SPRING - adults leave winter sites, fly to maple trees, lay eggs. SUMMER - eggs hatch, young feed on maple leaves and complete development. Only 1 generation per year.