School & Home Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Newsletter – December 2025

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
Agriculture, Life & Veterinary Sciences & Cooperative Extension

Please consider distributing this newsletter to others.

We wish everyone a wonderful holiday season!

Winter Rains and Springtails

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Following the wet spell around Thanksgiving, many people noticed and reported small, jumping insects in large numbers in moist indoor and outdoor areas (Figure 1, 2). These creatures are technically not insects, but insect-like creatures known as **springtails**. They get their name from their jumping or springing movement when disturbed. Springtails are usually seen in the spring but can occur year-round if moist conditions prevail. Both terrestrial and aquatic species exist.

Figure 1. A congregation of springtails. Photo: Kate Redmond, University of Wisconsin.

Springtails belong to the class Collembola under the phylum Arthropoda and are therefore also referred to as "**collembolans**". The class name "Collembola" is derived from two Greek words *kólla* meaning 'glue' and *émbolos* meaning 'peg', referring to a peg-like appendage, called collophore, on their abdomen. The collophore was earlier thought to help them stick to different surfaces, but now it is understood that it has other functions including excretion and orientation of the body.

Figure 2. Adult springtails gathered in a puddle.
Photo: Joseph OBrien, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org.

Habitat

Springtails are essentially outdoor creatures, and occur naturally in moist soil, and they prefer environments rich in organic matter. When numbers increase, they can be found floating on the surface of swimming pools or puddles of water (Figure 2) and congregating on surrounding sidewalks or walls. They thrive in heavily irrigated turf, greenhouses or hothouses that are maintained at high humidity.

When their outdoor habitats become dry, springtails will move indoors for moisture. They can easily enter homes through window screens and open doors, or through gaps in door sweeps or weather stripping. They can also come in through utility pipes, or in potted plants. Once indoors, they crawl and jump about to find moist spots such as kitchen sinks, bathtubs, bathroom sinks and floor drains. They may also congregate in damp basements, wall voids and crawl spaces. Without moisture, they will not survive and will die in a few days.

Identification

Springtails are tiny, measuring about 1/16th of an inch in length, and vary greatly in color and body shape. Common body colors are off-white to gray, or black. Most species of springtails have a tail-like appendage on the final body segment known as a furcula (or furca). It is kept folded beneath the body, held under tension by a small clasp-like structure called the retinaculum (or tenaculum) (Figure 3). When movement is triggered, the clasp is released, causing the furca to snap against the substrate, thus causing the springtail to jump into the air. Due to their jumping motion, they may be mistaken for fleas.

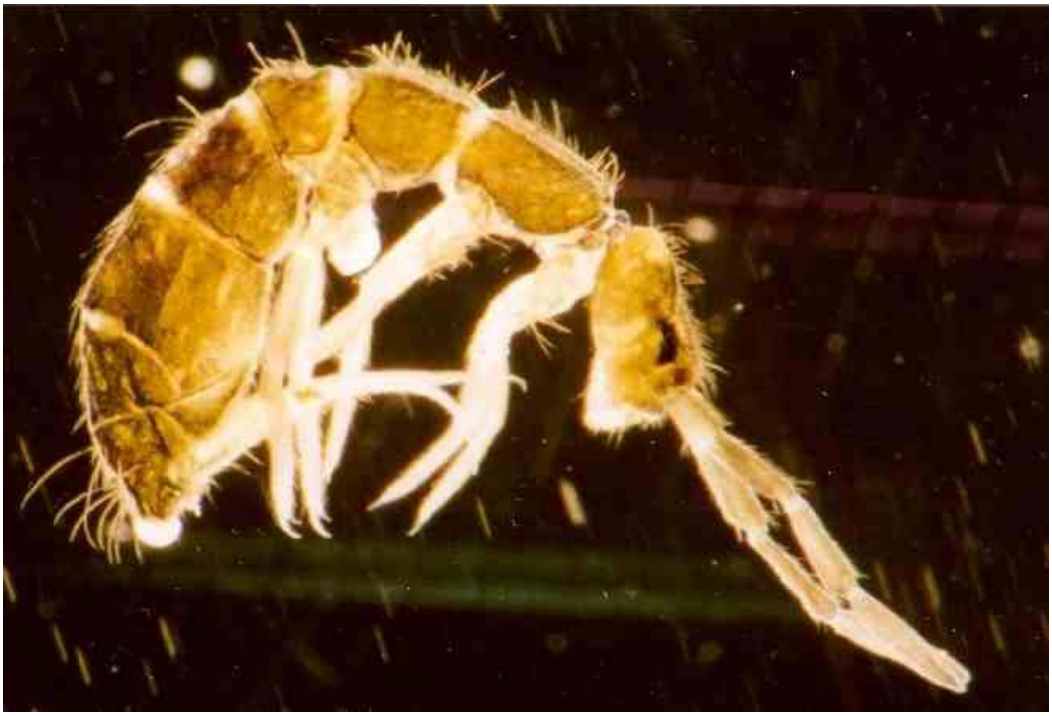


Figure 3. A magnified view of a springtail. Note the tail-like furcula folded beneath the body. Photo: U. Burkhardt, Wikimedia Commons.

Damage

Most species of springtails are scavengers feeding on decaying organic matter. They do not bite, sting, or cause structural damage, nor do they vector diseases. They can be a nuisance when they occur in large numbers in and around homes and structures.

There are some pest species that can cause significant damage to crop seedlings by feeding on their roots and leaves. However, they do not damage grown plants.

Recurring infestations prolonged presence of springtails can be an indication of high moisture levels and may warrant inspection for leaks in the foundation or basement of structures, or irrigation systems in landscapes.

Management

The best and most effective way to get rid of springtails, if they do not go away by themselves, is to reduce moisture in the environment. Reducing conditions that favor buildup of moisture is also essential. Here are some steps that can be taken:

Outdoors

- Eliminate moist conditions by ensuring proper drainage of water away from the perimeter of homes or structures.
- Avoid piling excessive mulch and organic matter buildup around the structure. Remove landscape debris promptly.
- Check irrigation systems for leaks on a regular basis, and repair leaks promptly.
- Avoid overwatering landscape plants.
- Springtails in swimming pools or water features can be removed by normal pool filtering or using a skimmer.

Indoors

- Ensure that door sweeps and window screens are functional and repair any gaps, tears or rips promptly.
- Seal gaps or cracks around doors and windows.
- In case of a leak or spill, dry it out as soon as possible, using fans if needed.
- Water indoor plants minimally, and if necessary, place them outside for a few days to reduce access to habitat.
- If springtails congregate inside the sink or bathtub, wash them down with water. Do not spray or flush with bleach or pesticides.
- Springtails on the floor can be swept away or vacuumed.

Chemical pesticides are generally not necessary for springtail management. If favorable conditions (moisture) are not corrected, pesticides will only offer a temporary solution. Further, pesticides applied to the ground in an effort to get rid of springtails can end up in groundwater causing contamination. Therefore, such applications are not recommended and should be avoided.

Is Your Turf Winter-ready?

Shaku Nair
Department of Entomology, University of Arizona

Around this time of year (November-December), warm-season turfgrasses (e.g., bermudagrass) start to go dormant and lose their green color. This does not mean they are dying, but that they are going into a low activity state to tide over the cold months. Overseeding the warm-season grass provides a green lawn through the winter until springtime, when the warm-season grasses come out of dormancy and resume their growth.

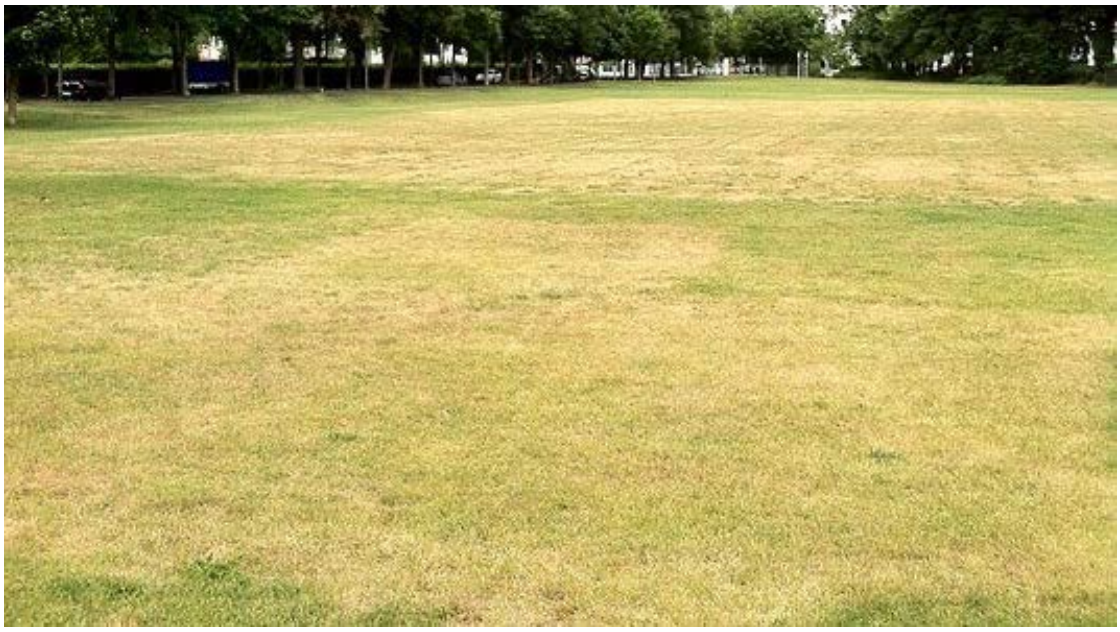
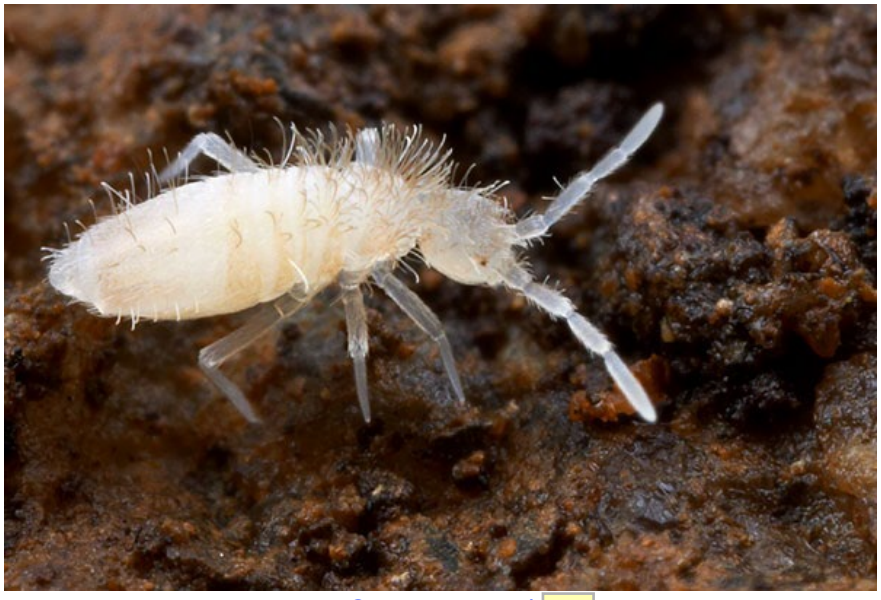


Figure 4. Warm season grasses lose their green color during winter and turn a golden tan. Photo: Petra Faltermaier.

In the low desert, the ideal time for overseeding is when daytime temperatures are 80-85°F and nighttime temperatures are about 55°F (October – November). Overseeding too early when temperatures are warmer favors bermudagrass and prevents the winter grass from getting established. Later overseeding may be threatened by frost when young seedling grass may be damaged. If you have not overseeded your lawn already, it may be best to skip it this year and let your lawn rest over the winter.

Non-overseeded bermudagrass lawns that stay blond throughout the winter generally do not require supplemental irrigation. Only if winter rains are lacking, the irrigation system could be turned on once a month, December – February, to **keep the roots moist and to prevent desiccation**. Read more about the process of overseeding winter grasses into summer lawns and the spring transition, in our **publication**.

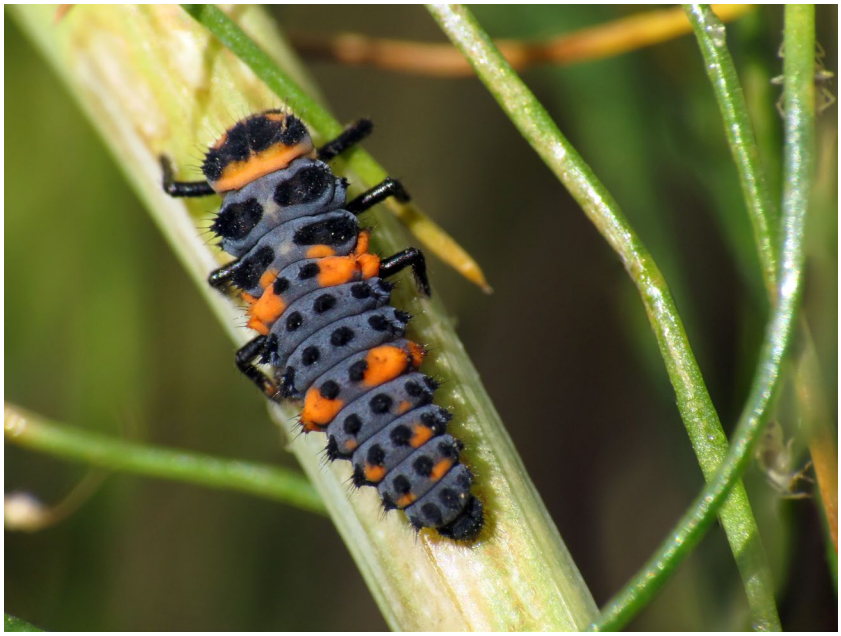
What the Heck Was This? (From our November issue)



Answer: Collembolan/ springtail

Congratulations to Master Pest Detective
Donna Lorch, Maricopa County Master Gardener

What the Heck is This?

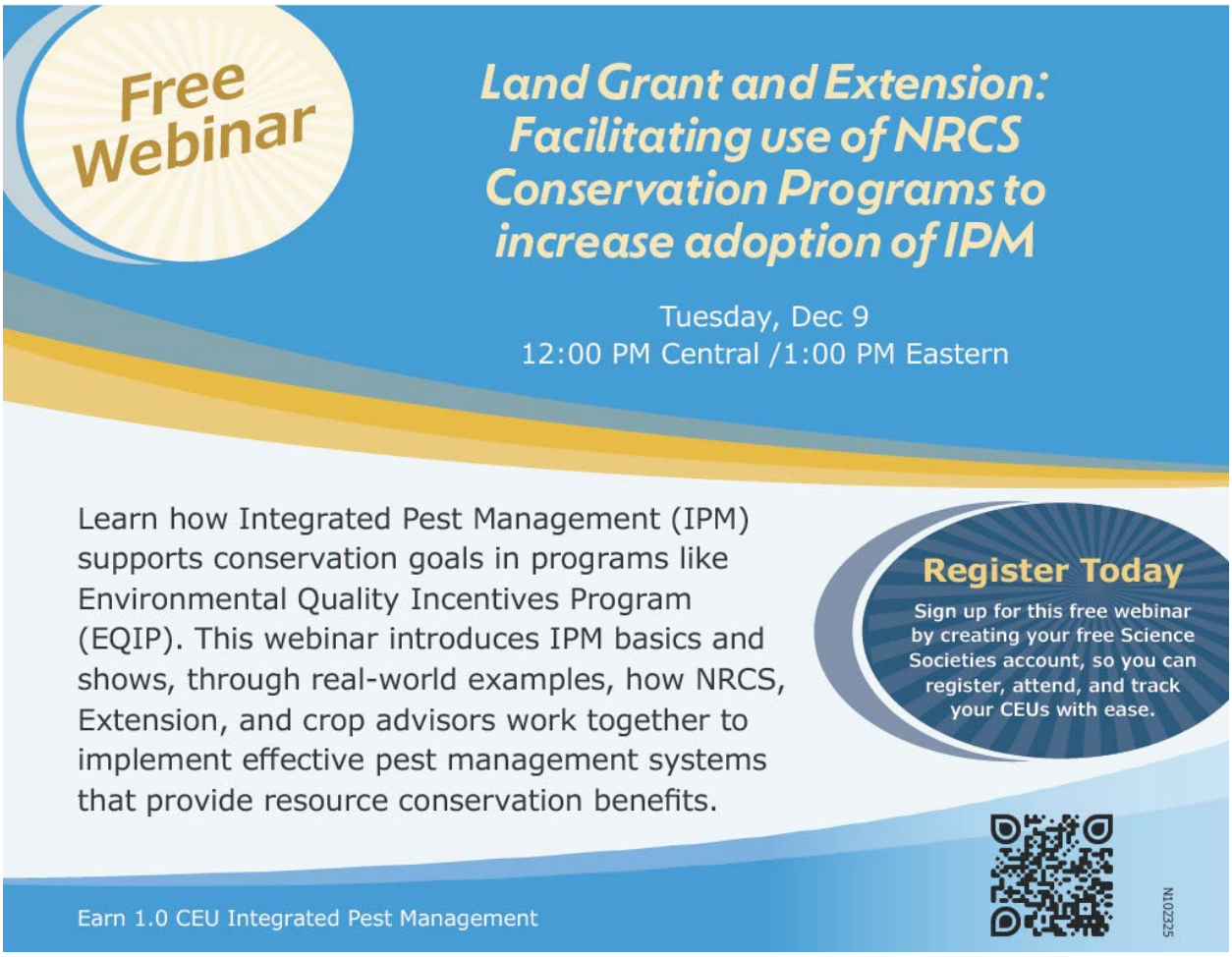


If you know the answer, email Dawn at dhgouge@arizona.edu. You will not win anything if you are correct, but you will be listed as a **"Master Pest Detective"** in the next newsletter issue.

Upcoming/Ongoing Events

IPM Institute of North America is organizing a Free Webinar:

Land Grant and Extension: Facilitating use of NRCS Conservation Programs to increase adoption of IPM



Webinar Date & Time: Tuesday, December 9 | *12:00 PM - 1:00 PM CST* | Virtual| Free to attend | Earn 1.0 CEU Integrated Pest Management | **REGISTER**

Save the dates:
9th Arizona School IPM Conference
April 21 & 22, 2026 in Phoenix AZ
Arizona OPM (PMD) and AG CEUs will be applied for.

What's Bugging You? First Friday Events ***(New York State IPM Program)***
Fridays | 12:00 pm. – 12:30 p.m. EDT | Zoom | Free but registration required.

In this monthly virtual series, we explore timely topics to help you use integrated pest management (IPM) to avoid pest problems and promote a healthy environment where you live, work, learn and play. What is IPM? It's a wholistic approach that uses different tools and practices to not only reduce pest problems, but to also address the reasons why pests are there in the first place. Each month, our speakers will share practical information about how you can use IPM. **Register for upcoming events.**

What's Bugging You First Friday events are also available in **Spanish**. Individuals interested in these events can find more information on this website: https://cals.cornell.edu/new-york-state-integrated-pest-management/outreach-education/events/whats-bugging-you-webinars/conozca-su-plaga

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Urban and Community IPM Webinars (Host: University of California)
UC Statewide IPM Program Urban and Community webinar series is held the third Thursday of every month to teach about pest identification, prevention and management around the home and garden. This series is free but advanced registration is required. Dates and topics below, all begin at noon Pacific. https://ucanr.edu/sites/ucipm-community-webinars/

To view previous University of Arizona newsletters, visit:
https://acis.cals.arizona.edu/community-ipm/home-and-school-ipm-newsletters.

We want to hear from you!

Please take this short 5-question survey about our newsletter:
https://uarizona.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cMhZ82JodDKJgCa

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Acknowledgements

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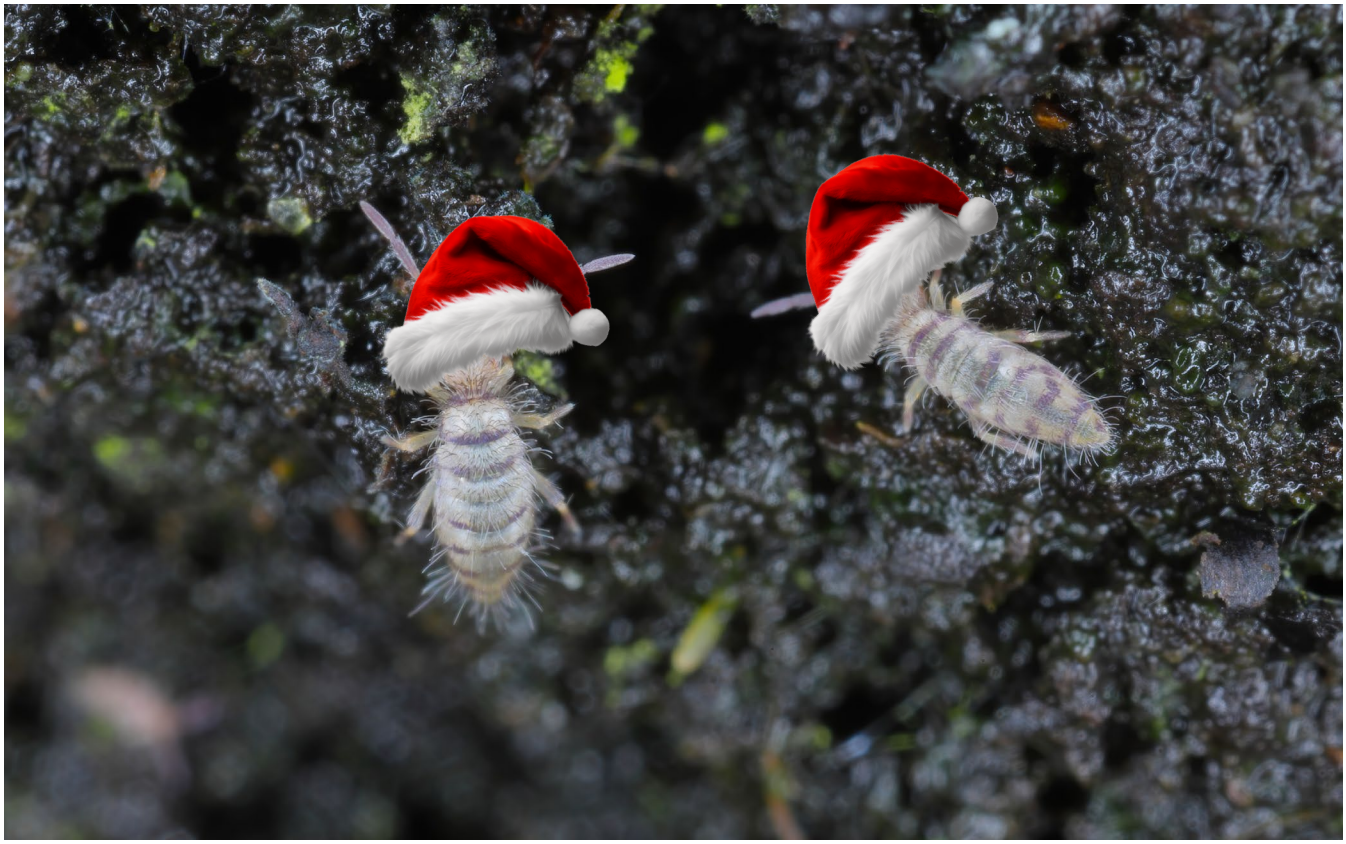
We respectfully acknowledge the University of Arizona is on the land and territories of Indigenous peoples. Today, Arizona is home to 22 federally recognized tribes, with Tucson being home to the O'odham and the Yaqui. Committed to diversity and inclusion, the University strives to build sustainable relationships with sovereign Native Nations and Indigenous communities through education offerings, partnerships, and community service.




HAPPY
HOLIDAYS