Quick Tips

Carpet Beetles

Carpet beetles can be found in homes, warehouses, museums, or anywhere else fabric, furs, and feathers are present.

The larvae feed on a variety of animal products like wool, leather, and silk, often causing serious damage. Manage carpet beetles by keeping them out of your home and by thoroughly cleaning and removing infested items.

What do carpet beetles look like?

- Adult carpet beetles are small (about ⅛ to ¼ inch long) and have round bodies and short antennae. They range in color from black to a mix of white, brown, and yellow, depending on the species and age.
- Larvae are slightly longer than adults and look like fuzzy or hairy maggots.
- In California, there are three common species: the varied carpet beetle, the furniture carpet beetle, and the black carpet beetle.

What are carpet beetles doing in my house and how did they get in?

- Carpet beetle adults are pollen feeders and are found on flowers with abundant pollen like crape myrtle, spiraea, and buckwheat.
- People often bring carpet beetles into their homes on cut flowers from the garden.
- Adults can fly in through open windows or doors without screens.

Preventing and excluding carpet beetles.

- Check window screens, doors, and vents to make sure there are no gaps or holes.
- Look for beetles on windowsills since they are attracted to light.
- Use pheromone traps on windowsills to trap male beetles.
- Inspect cut flowers for beetles before bringing them inside.
- Store pest-free susceptible items in airtight containers.
- Protect fabrics by keeping them clean since food and perspiration residues attract carpet beetles.
- Inspect stored woolens, linens, and furs, and air these items annually in the sun.
- Create a pest-free storage place in a seldom-opened closet by sealing cracks around the doors, in the walls, and ceiling.
- Cedar chests are not reliable or effective at repelling pests and the oil dissipates over time.

Controlling carpet beetles in the house.

- Clean up accumulations of lint, hair, and dead insects.
- Throw out badly infested items.
- Remove old spider webs which can harbor infestations.
- Regularly clean and vacuum rugs, draperies, and upholstered furniture to remove carpet beetles.
- Wash infested items in hot water or dry-clean them to kill all stages of the insect.

What about pesticides?

- Insecticides may not be necessary if food sources are removed and areas kept clean. Use insecticides specifically labeled for carpet beetles.
- Spot treat with an insecticide if you have infested items that can’t be washed. Don’t spray clothing or bedding with insecticides.
- Inspect carpets and spray both sides if live larvae are found.
- Treat attics, wall voids, and other inaccessible places with an insecticidal dust labeled for carpet beetles. Take precautions to avoid inhaling the material.

What you do in your home and landscape affects our water and health.

- Minimize the use of pesticides that pollute our waterways and harm human health.
- Use nonchemical alternatives or less toxic pesticide products whenever possible.
- Read product labels carefully and follow instructions on proper use, storage, and disposal.

For more information about managing pests, visit ipm.ucanr.edu or your local University of California Cooperative Extension office.