

The Stink Bugs are Here!



Stink Bug Basics

The *brown marmorated Stink Bug* also known as the BMSB is a dime-sized insect that is brown on both the upper and lower sides of its body. Stink Bugs have a back shaped like a shield with a marbled or streaked appearance. The most noticeable characteristic of the Stink Bug is the awful smell sometimes described as "skunk-like" that it releases when squashed or irritated. Stink Bugs are harmless to people and their possessions. They don't bite. They don't sting. They are not known to transmit disease. But their population has grown tremendously causing concern to homeowners and creating a nightmare for farmers when the bugs damage peaches, apples, soybeans, corn and even shrubs and trees. They have mouthpieces that resemble a straw. The Stink Bug's mouthpiece is used to pierce fruit and vegetables and suck out their juices.



How did they get here?

The bugs are native to China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan in Asia and were most likely unintentionally transported to the United States in shipping containers. The brown marmorated Stink Bugs (BMSB) made their first confirmed appearance in Allentown, Pennsylvania in 2001. They arrived in western Maryland by 2003 and began heading east. The bugs have spread to more than 32 states although the center of the infestation is the Mid-Atlantic States. The Stink Bugs in Asia have natural predators which control their population. In the United States, they have no natural predator and are spreading in unimaginable numbers.

How do they bother homeowners?

No one likes to have bugs of any kind in their houses. Stink Bugs because of their size and color really stand out when they are in the house. Stink Bugs crawl into houses over windowsills, through door crevices and between attic vents. They can be seen crawling up the walls, inside of curtains and will even attach themselves to clothes drying outside. Some folks have reported finding them in their pockets or

crawling up the inside of their pants. It is a myth that the bugs cut through screens. The fact is that their mouthpiece is not capable of doing that! Some people think that they come through sewer lines or toilets. This is not true. The fact is Stink Bugs are not aquatic. If you see one in your sink or toilet, it probably just fell in!

Homeowners cannot get rid of them since there is no known product that will do this. Homeowners should seal up any cracks and external holes where Stink Bugs can enter the house. A vacuum can be used to suck them up. However, the vacuum will most likely take on the smell of the bugs for several weeks. If you think things are bad now, just wait until the third week in September. That is when experts say the Stink Bug population will explode and they will be seeking homes in which to spend the winter!

How do they bother farmers?

This past year in Maryland, the Stink Bug created the most extensive damage **ever** to tree fruit such as apples and peaches and vegetables. The Stink Bugs suck out juices, leaving pockmarks on the fruit and vegetables that make them unmarketable. They leave small craters on the surface of an apple or pear and the inside can get brown and corklike.



Entomologists that study insects say we should "get used to it" because the invasion of the Stink Bugs is only going to get worse. There is no easy way to kill the bugs. They have no natural predators in the United States. Pesticides don't work effectively. The insects travel easily - hitching rides on buses and construction material - and adapt to winter in homes. Scientists from more than 50 research groups are working together, sharing their data and trying to find a solution to this stinky pest!

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Name: _____

Date: _____



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Directions: Read each question and fill in the best answer

1. Which is a characteristic of a Stink Bug?

- A. They bite.
- B. They sting.
- C. They are multiplying rapidly.
- D. They cause diseases.

2. Which is true of Stink Bugs?

- A. They came from Asia.
- B. They made their 1st confirmed appearance in Pennsylvania in 2001.
- C. They arrived in Maryland in 2003.
- D. All of the above.

3. Which is the **BIGGEST** problem in dealing with the Stink Bug in the United States?

- A. They enter homes through sewer lines.
- B. They smell if they are vacuumed.
- C. They have no natural predators.
- D. They cut holes in screens to get into houses.

4. The **MAIN** reason farmers don't like Stink Bugs is

- A. they get into their houses.
- B. they damage apple, peach and vegetable crops.
- C. the pesticides they need to kill them are expensive.
- D. they smell.

5. Stink Bugs will continue to annoy homeowners and damage farm crops until scientists can find a solution and keep them from multiplying.

- A. True
- B. False

6. Which best describes the author's purpose in writing this article?

- A. to scare people
- B. to inform people
- C. to keep people from hanging their clothes outside to dry
- D. to entertain readers

Extended Response: Answer the following and include supporting details.

Your neighbor has lots of Stink Bugs and is very worried that they are going to hurt her family. Use the facts you have learned to explain to her why this is not true. Also, share with her the problems that farmers face as they deal with Stink Bugs.

Stink Bug Trivia



- Stink Bugs get their name because this family of insects uses chemicals for defense. Any other insect that tries to eat them quickly spits them out as they smell and taste is bad.
- Stink Bugs have no natural predators in the United States, which is why we have an uncontrolled population. Spiders and the praying mantis will eat them but it is not enough to control them.
- In China, there is a wasp that is responsible for 70% of the mortality rate of the Stink Bug and that keeps them in check there.
- Stink Bugs come out of homes in late April through early May depending on when vegetation starts to fill in. They like greens. They are attracted to Butterfly Bushes.
- Stink Bugs begin to come into your home in late September when the light/dark cycle changes. They settle in dark, cool, undisturbed places like attics, crevices and unused chimneys.