European earwig

Forficula auricularia
Earwig unfolding wings. Despite the presence of a large hind wing, this species does not fly.
The cerci (aka ‘forceps’), are fairly weakly muscled. They are used during mating (by males) and can help to manipulate prey.
European earwig - male

European earwig - female
Male

Female

Male

Photograph courtesy of Jim Kalisch, University of Nebraska
Earwigs have simple metamorphosis:

- Newly hatched nymphs
- Mass of eggs
- Mother tending eggs and young
Mother earwig with 2nd instar nymphs
Earwigs are *omnivores*

Small soft-bodied insects and insect eggs make up an important part of their diet.
Earwigs feed at night
Flower petals and soft plant parts are also eaten by earwigs.

Earwigs feed at night.
Thigmotaxis – “a predilection for pressure”
Earwigs – Increasing as garden problems?
Mulches and Nuisance Invaders

- European earwig
- Springtails
- Millipedes

- Sowbugs/Pillbugs
- Field crickets
- Some spiders
European Earwigs

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by W.S. Cranshaw

The European earwig is an insect migrant from Europe that was established in the eastern United States around 1907. This insect rapidly spread across the United States and has occurred in Colorado since the 1950s.

The European earwig is about 5/8 inch long and brown with a reddish head. Young earwigs are similar in appearance to adults but smaller. A distinctive feature is the pair of prominent forceps at the rear of the body. Those of the male are more strongly curved than those of the female.

This is the only earwig found throughout most of Colorado. In the extreme southern of debris. Peak problems with earwigs in Colorado tend to occur from mid-July through mid-September.

Earwigs are active at night and feed on a wide variety of materials. They occasionally cause injury to leafy plants such as lettuce and some flower blossoms. They often are associated with injuries caused by other insects. For example, leaves curled by aphids and holes in fruit are favorite hiding places for earwigs.

Earwigs mainly are a nuisance pest. Their reputation is made worse by the widespread fear that many people have regarding these insects. Several tales exist concerning alleged

Quick Facts

- The common earwigs found in Colorado are an introduced insect that arrived in the state during the 1950s.
- Occasionally, earwigs damage soft parts of plants. However, the main food of earwigs is insects, including plant pests such as aphids.
- Earwigs like to hide in dark, tight-fitting areas during the
Basic Earwig Trap Design for Bait Tests
Baiting Evaluations

– Rolled corrugated cardboard or crumpled newspaper can be used in trap design

– Addition of either wheat bran or wheat germ *greatly increase capture of earwigs in traps*

– Vegetable oil in a sunken cup is highly effective for earwig capture
Canola oil in a small cup
One night’s capture!