

Fungus Gnats

Fungus gnats (*Bradysia* spp.) are small (1/8 inch), delicate, black flies with long legs and antennae. They are a common insect seen indoors, particularly in winter and spring, usually in close proximity to potted plants. The adults are sometimes considered a nuisance, although they are short-lived (less than a week), cannot bite, and do not feed. The larvae are worm-like and translucent, with a black head capsule, and develop in soil/growing media. They primarily feed on fungi and algae but may incidentally chew smaller plant roots. Direct root damage from fungus gnats is usually minimal, but injured roots can be invaded by fungi that cause root decay.

Fungus gnat larvae are usually located in the top 2-3 inches of growing medium, depending on moisture level, where they feed on fungi, algae, and decaying plant matter. They will feed on plant roots and sometimes on leaves resting on the growing medium surface.



Fungus gnat larvae.



(Top) Fungus gnat adult on soil. (Bottom) Fungus gnat adult trapped on a sticky card.

Larvae develop rapidly and are fully grown in 2 to 3 weeks. They then pupate in or on the growing medium surface. Adults emerge about a week later. Fungus gnat adults are weak fliers, typically flying in short, erratic patterns. In homes, they are commonly observed near the vicinity of and associated with the growing medium of houseplants; however, they may disperse short distances often accumulating around window frames.

During their seven to 10 day life span females may lay up to 200 eggs into the cracks and

crevices of growing media. Moist growing media composed of peat moss are particularly

attractive to adult females. At typical room temperatures (65 to 75°F) the life cycle (egg to adult) may be completed in 3 to 4 weeks.

Diptera: Sciaridae