

## What Are These Little Flies?

Throughout the year, there is one group of insects that people may have to deal with in their homes. This group of small (about 5 mm), usually slow-moving flies has many members but are most commonly drain flies, fruit flies, or fungus gnats. Because of their size and similar habits, they are easily misidentified, but need to be properly identified to effectively manage them.

Fruit flies found indoors are usually reddish-brown with clear or lightly-banded wings. They are attracted to byproducts of fermentation. Thus, they will most often be found around fruit and vegetable matter, but will also be attracted to any yeast or vinegar-like aromas. The only effective control is to not allow larval development by eliminating potential food sources such as fruit and vegetable peelings, rotting fruits, and other things along these lines. It is possible to bring them in via plant products, so you need to consistently maintain a lack of breeding sites within your house, especially in summer.

Drain flies are also called moth flies because of their fuzzy appearance and wing shape. They are dark gray to black in color and are usually found near sinks, tubs, or basins. Their larvae develop in moist decaying material, especially in materials that collect in seldom-used pipes or at pipe bends/traps. They are fairly easily controlled by running hot water at periodic intervals through seldom used pipes. Running hot water into sink overflow drains is also necessary as this is a very common larval development area.

Fungus gnat larvae feed on decaying plant materials and fungal materials and usually develop in soil of houseplants, although they don't actually hurt the plants. The most common varieties have black wings, but are not fuzzy like the drain flies. There are two ways to control them. The easiest is to make sure that all houseplant soils dry out somewhat between waterings - which is also good for the plant, usually. The larvae will not survive in dry conditions. There is also a Bt insecticide that is effective when applied to soil, it is called Gnatrol.

If you're having problems figuring out which of these you have, bring us a sample (preferably not completely flattened!).