

Elm Seed Bugs Around Your Home

Quick Facts about Elm Seed Bugs

- First identified in the United States in 2009 and in Oregon in 2013.
- Emit an odor when crushed or smashed and are a nuisance, but pose no threat to human health, plants, or structures
- Very active from June to October and appear in homes during this time of year as they prefer to hide from high temperatures
- Are more common in areas with heritage elm trees and feed off elm and oak seeds
- Dormant over winter and begin laying eggs on elm seeds in the spring

Elm Seed Bug Lifecycle and Appearance

The elm seed bug life cycle has three stages: egg, nymph, and adult.

Eggs

- Laid on elm seeds in the spring
- Homeowners rarely notice the eggs

Nymphs

- Appear in residential landscapes by early summer
- 1/20-inch long when they hatch with a dark brown head and bright-red, soft bodies
- Body color changes to a pink-tan as they grow

Adults

- Appear in residential landscapes by early summer
- Prefer cooler temperatures and move indoors during higher temperature days
- Spend winter inside buildings and outdoors under tree bark, leaf litter, stacked firewood, and sheltered areas
- About 1/3-inch long with a dark chocolate body with red and white highlights, as well as wings that fold over their backs
- A unique feature is their dark downward-facing triangle on a red rectangle and narrow white bands near their abdomen



Image 1: Elm Seed Bug late-stage nymph. Photo credit: Bradley Stokes (University of Idaho Extension Service)



Image 2: Adult Elm Seed Bug. Above image highlights distinguishing features on adults back. Photo credit: Bradley Stokes (University of Idaho Extension Service)

Elm Seed Bug Management Options

Elm seed bugs are a nuisance pest but do not pose any known risks to health or property. Efforts can be made to exclude them from entering the home.

Keep areas around your yard, especially beneath elm trees, raked and free of debris.

- Raking and removing seeds that fall from elm trees reduces the elm seed bug food source.

Seal home to limit bugs ability to enter your home.

- Use weather-stripping or door sweeps around doors, caulk around windows and install tight-fitting screens.
- Complete exterior caulk and seal in July and then interior caulk and seal in fall.

Use a wet/dry shop vacuum to remove bugs. Put soapy water in the canister to kill captured bugs.

Inspect firewood for adult bugs before bringing it inside.

Apply broad-spectrum insecticides or natural alternatives as an outdoor barrier immediately around your home.

- Consult a professional pest manager, university extension service, or over-the-counter label instructions to identify the best insecticide, correct timing, and proper application.
- Except for extreme cases, experts recommend against interior pesticides to manage Elm Seed Bugs as they are too mobile and secretive for it to be effective. The best defense is to create an outdoor barrier to prevent them from entering.
- Do not spray entire landscape or trees as it is ineffective and can hurt plants and trees as well as increase potential exposure to humans and wildlife.
- Place commercial sticky traps along windows sills to catch bugs entering the home.



Source: Oregon State University, "Eastern Oregon Gardening:February/March 2016", extension.oregonstate.edu;
University of Idaho, "Managing Elm Seed Bugs around Your Home", www.uidaho.edu; Utah State University, "Utah Pests fact sheet; Elm Seed Bugs", extension.usu.edu; Utah State University, "Ask an Expert: New Pest Found in Utah Homes— The Elm Seed Bug" extension.usu.edu