2015 VICTORIAN
PEST MANAGER OF THE YEAR

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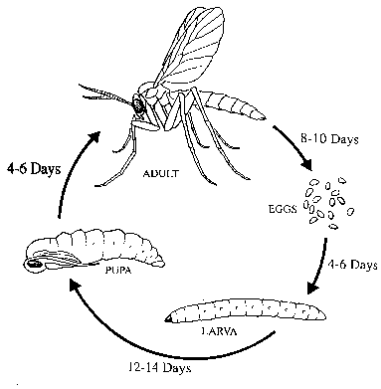
Fungus Gnat

Fungus gnats belong to the families *Sciaridae* and *Fungivoridae* and typically are found in and around areas with high humidity. Female fungus gnats deposit their eggs in soil or other damp, decaying organic plant material. These eggs hatch into larvae. The larvae of some species feed on fungus usually in overwatered soil, but there are other species that consume plant roots as a source of nutrients. This can affect the health of the plants and show signs of stunted development. Gnat larvae also carry plant pathogens and make plants highly susceptible to various plant diseases.

Unlike some other flying insects, fully mature fungus gnats often remain low to the ground, close to plants and soil. Adults are seen on leaf litter and foliage, while larvae remain in the soil until they pupate. The larvae of fungus gnats are legless and have transparent bodies with black head capsules. Pupae are difficult to see without the use of a magnifying glass. They are stout and dark in colour.

Fungus Gnat Life Cycle & Biology

Larvae develop and feed in damp, organic material and are typically found in the soil around pot plants indoor. Larvae begin feeding on fungus or on the root hairs of plants but eventually turn their attention to the roots of the plant, as well as edible organic material present within the soil. Dark-winged fungus gnat larvae feed on the roots of food plants such as alfalfa, clover, corn, cucumbers, lettuce, nasturtium, peppers, poinsettias, potatoes, soybeans, wheat along with Easter lilies, carnation geraniums, and other organic matter.



Larvae then undergo a pupal stage that spans approximately three days, after which adult gnats emerge. These adult fungus gnats continue the mating cycle, increasing the population of their species. Because fungus gnats are extremely small, their presence can go undetected until previously healthy plants show signs of wilting and disease.

Both adult and larval fungus gnats inhabit humid and dark areas. Eggs hatch within a few days, and fungus gnat larvae emerge.

Controlling or Getting Rid of Fungus Gnats

The use of natural parasites may be effective in commercial growing environments. Fungus gnats infest home, office, commercial and apartment plants, as well, and insecticide use is difficult to be effective against flying insects. Rather, it is important to constantly monitor your houseplants for winged adults. Do not overwater plants. Call Exopest to discuss eradication of indoor populations with treatment to possible harbourages and breeding sites.