



# Spring Tails

## What are They?

Springtails are members of the Collembola and are sometimes grouped in a class called Entognatha because they have internal mouthparts. Normally, a Springtail is less than 6mm (0.24in) in length. Most species have a furcula (abdominal, tail-like appendage shaped like a fork). This furcula is folded beneath its body and used for jumping when the animal is threatened. It is held under tension by a small structure called the retinaculum and when released, snaps against the substrate, flinging the springtail into the air. All of this takes place in as little as 18 milliseconds.



## **HABITAT**

Springtails live in moist environments such as soil, especially compost soil, leaf litter, under bark or decaying wood, and organic matter. When their environment becomes dry they search for more suitable surroundings. Springtails feed on decaying plant matter, algae, molds, and fungi. They may invade homes or move to more favorable outdoor areas such as areas near swimming pools. They enter homes through open doors, window screens, vent pipes, & have been seen in potted plants. Greenhouses also provide the damp environment required for their development. Springtails quickly die after entering a home if they do not find moisture

## **DAMAGE**

Springtails will not bite or cause any damage to people or pets. They are harmless scavengers that feed mainly on decaying organic matter. Some species may damage plants by chewing on the roots and leaves of seedlings. The seedlings may appear wilted and may die if damaged when young. Mature plants suffer no significant damage from Springtails and they rarely cause any sufficient damage to plants to warrant control measures. Large populations, of springtails, become a nuisance in homes, greenhouses, and other locations where there is a source of moisture. The continuous observance of springtails indoors is an indication that moisture is present.

## **MANAGEMENT**

The key to managing springtails is to reduce moisture and excess organic matter in gardens, potted plants, and around building foundations. Also screen or caulk cracks that provide entryways for springtails into homes. Pesticides should not be necessary and won't provide long-term control without reducing the springtail's environment.