

News Article  
June 17, 2009  
Roger Vines  
County Extension Coordinator

### Getting Rid of Creepy Crawlers

This spring we have been blessed with an abundance of rainfall, which is a welcome sight after the previous year's droughts. Home lawns are nice and green and everything is growing including certain pests. One pest that I have had numerous phone calls about this spring is a creepy crawler with lots of legs called a millipede. These are not insects and they are not centipedes. Insects will always have six legs (three pairs). Centipedes have one pair of leg per segment and the millipedes have two pairs of legs per segment. Some folks call them thousand legs because that is what it looks like.

While centipedes can produce a painful bite, the millipedes are basically harmless except for a very foul odor when crushed. There are many different species of millipedes and some can get quite large. The one we usually get calls about is the common garden millipede, which is brown to black and only about  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches long and maybe  $\frac{1}{16}$ <sup>th</sup> of an inch wide. They love moisture and breed in any old decaying organic matter, such as in the thatch of home lawns or under mulch, leaf piles, old boards, or any place of shelter. But once they hatch out there can be thousands if not millions of these little crawlers and they begin to migrate all over the place.

They are often found around home foundations, carports, and patios and don't mind crawling into your house through any small crack they may find. Interestingly, they tend to invade around new homes more than older homes or maybe it just seems this way. I have seen situations where there were so many you could not take a step without crushing about fifty with every step.

Control involves trying to eliminate wherever they are breeding and reducing any area that retains moisture. Dethatching a home lawn, raking out and changing mulch, removing old boards or stacks of bricks, and so forth will help reduce the potential of this problem next year. However once you have these things crawling all over the place you have several options to get rid of them. Indoors it is best to just vacuum them up and then dispose of the bag. Outdoors, there are several general purpose insecticides that are also labeled for millipedes such as Baygon, Ficam and Sevin. A newer product that has shown good results is Triazicide which can be applied at the rate of one tablespoon per gallon of water. The amount to use depends on the size of the area treated but in general 8 tablespoons in 8 gallons of water will treat about 1000 square feet. If all this fails, the two brick method works every time.