

Stink bugs

Stink bugs have become a common topic of conversation ever since the **Halyomorpha halys** species, otherwise known as the **black marmorated stink bug**, took up residence in our homes. This species is **phytophagous**, which means it feeds by piercing plants, flowers and fruit but, **as winter approaches, it heads indoors in search of somewhere safe to spend the winter**. This behaviour is typical of many species of insects, including some ladybirds and flies. The problem obviously lies in the

number of insects that invade our homes and, since the black marmorated stink bug reproduces in large numbers, controlling them can sometimes become a huge task. The green stink bug behaves in much the same way but, being less common, it is less of a pest and easier to deal with. Other stink bugs which infest our homes in the winter include the elm seed bug (*Arocatus melanocephalus*) and the western conifer seed bug (*Leptoglossus occidentalis*). In spring, on the other hand, we can find large

concentrations of a red and black bug called the fire bug (*Pyrrhocoris apterus*) at the foot or on the bark of other species of trees. So, when we talk about **"stink bugs"**, **we are not referring purely to the green and brown varieties** but to a very large family of insects, **rhynchota heteroptera**, which have sucking and piercing mouthparts and are mainly phytophagous (mirids, ligeids, pyrrhocoridae, coreids) but can also be predators (nabids, reduvids) or even blood-sucking (bed bugs).

Bed bugs

These insects are heterometabolic, which means their shape or habits change very little as they grow; they simply get bigger and can grow wings (unless they belong to a species that has no wings). **Bed bugs are a blood-sucking species,**

they feed on blood because they need it to survive, unlike mosquitoes which only bite to reproduce eggs. This species is becoming more and more widespread due to the fact that people move about so much more nowadays. It is actually known as the

travellers' bug because it hides in the cracks in the bed, or nearby, and crawls out at night to bite. If you make the mistake of leaving your suitcase near your bed, the bug can climb in and hitch a ride home or to another hotel.

Getting rid of bed bugs

Bed bugs have become highly resistant to insecticides, so the most effective way of getting rid of them is to treat them with **thermal shock or carefully seek out their hiding places**. It is a good idea to leave this up to the professionals though, as it requires experience and expertise to find them all. **As far as green and brown stink bugs, or more generally species which enter our homes to overwinter, are concerned,**

the most effective way of getting rid of them is to treat the surfaces where they are most concentrated, like window frames, awnings and boxes for roller shutters. **Any products you use must have residual action, as they need to provide continuous protection throughout the autumn,** so it is advisable to opt for microencapsulated formulations. One tip to remember when trying to

get rid of stink bugs is that they like crawling into tight spaces, like between piles of cardboard, where they can hide over the winter. When the cardboard is full of stink bugs, it can be set alight, killing the insects inside, or placed in bags and thrown away.

