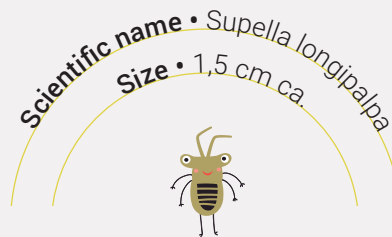
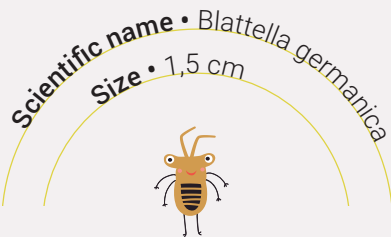


Beetles

Of all the insects we can come across in our homes, **beetles** or **cockroaches** are, without a doubt, two of our least favourites and can even cause real **phobias**. This emotional response is probably due to a number of factors linked to their behaviour and biology. First of all, they are unpredictable and sneaky; this is, however, a perception seen purely from the human point of view of an insect that is simply going

about its business. We don't see them during the day but at night, as soon as we switch on the light, we find them roaming around our homes. This terrible surprise only lasts a fraction of a second because they vanish at an almost incredible speed, hiding in inaccessible cracks. Another reason we find these insects so unpleasant is that they come up through the drains: it is almost impossible, therefore, not

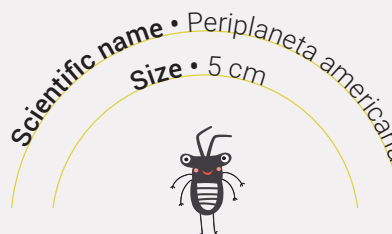
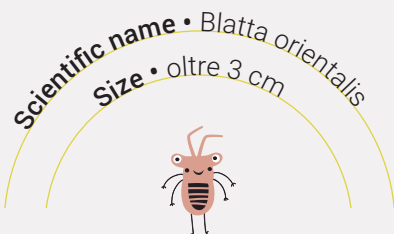
to think of them as dirty and a potential cause of bacterial contamination, something that is true although not all species behave like this. In **Italy**, although it is probably better to say throughout the world, there are four common species of beetles and cockroaches.



It can climb up any surface, including steel and glass, and is particularly at home in kitchens. It can also be found in other places, but only if there is a serious infestation. Its excrement looks like coffee powder and is a clear giveaway that it has invaded the space. Extremely common, it often infests bars and restaurants.

This species is very similar to the German cockroach (*Blattella germanica*) but it needs a drier and hotter environment to survive. In fact, it is more common in the south of Italy and can be found in any room of the house, especially near the ceiling.

← These two species do not live in drains or outdoors.



This is the classic black beetle; it cannot climb up smooth surfaces and is most at home in very humid environments. It can therefore be found in sewers, basements and septic tanks and comes out of manholes and drains at night in search of new places to infest, thus entering our homes.

This is the largest species of cockroach, it is reddish brown and has wings but rarely flies. It loves hot environments and is mainly found in the south of Italy where it has practically replaced the black beetle underground.



One unusual characteristic of cockroaches is that they produce an **ootheca**, a sack containing a couple of dozen eggs. The ootheca is reddish brown and is carried by the female and left somewhere she thinks will be suitable for the newly born insects to grow. The babies are identical to adults but smaller and have no wings.



Prevention

Unfortunately there's not a lot **we can do to stop** beetles entering our homes. They move from apartment to apartment or we can actually bring them into our homes from bars, restaurants or shops because, without realising it, they sneak into our bags or shopping. The black beetle and American cockroach move around through the sewer system or they enter our homes at night through windows or drains as they crawl along walls or

pavements, so keeping your house clean is not an effective deterrent. Of course, if we know the area we live is infested, we can close our windows at night and cover our drains with stoppers or filters, including wash basins and bidets.

You can also buy **adhesive traps** which have a sticky substance that attracts beetles. These traps are useful for occasional visitors as, instead of running around the house, they end

up in the traps, also giving us a better idea of a situation we can't see during the day. Since beetles are nocturnal animals, the risk is we only realise we have them when they have already infested our home.

What to do if you have an infestation

Solutions vary depending on the species.

If you have cockroaches, the answer is to leave little drops of special **gels** in places where there is no danger of accidental contact or contaminating food. The insects are attracted by the irresistible smell and come out of their hiding places to feed and then go on to a better life. These gels are sold in ready-to-use syringes or "houses". As a general rule, spray products are not a satisfactory solution, as these insects hide in inaccessible places, such as behind cupboards and in the fridge motor etc.

It is also important to remember it **is not healthy** to use **insecticides** in the kitchen, especially powders. The best way to get rid of cockroaches are the gels mentioned here, which can be used locally in a room. If you have large cockroaches, on the other hand, you need to call in the professionals who will deal with them in the drains. We can, however, use sprays and powders to create barriers to keep cockroaches out of our homes and garages. Insecticides that can be used as barrier treatment are generally slow-acting so cockroaches are not immediately

affected by the poison and take quite a long time to die. At some point in our lives, everyone has seen "drunk" or dying cockroaches. They are **cockroaches** that have come into contact with the insecticide which has slowly had an effect on the insect, allowing it to get into your home but inexorably signalling its death.