

Scorpions

Scorpions are quite common in much of the southern and southwestern United States. Most species which enter houses are not very poisonous, their stings being comparable to those of bees or wasps. However, certain species in the desert Southwest can be dangerous, especially to sensitive or allergic people. Most scorpions are active at night and they glow under a blacklight, making them easy to spot. During the day they hide under bark, boards, rocks, or in trash. In houses, they are most often found in undisturbed areas such as closets, seldom-used shoes, or folded clothing.

Typical of the scorpions is the common striped scorpion, *Centruroides vittatus*, which is widely distributed in the southern United States. It has 2 broad, dark bands extending the length of the back, on an otherwise yellowish-brown body. Mature specimens are slightly less than 1.5-inches long.

Two dangerously poisonous scorpions are *Centruroides gertschi* Stahnke and *Centruroides sculpturatus* Ewing. They may reach a maximum length of 2 to 3 inches. Both species are found in southern Arizona and adjacent areas of California, New Mexico, and Texas. In these areas, scorpions are generally found in homes because of the availability of water and shade in and around the house.

Scorpions feed on small spiders and soft bodied insects. They will eat other species of scorpions and even small individuals of their own species. They have poor eyesight, so do not stalk or chase prey, but lie in waiting to grab it with their pincers. Small insects are eaten immediately, but larger prey are stung and eaten after they cease to struggle.

The first step in managing scorpions around dwellings is to remove all debris such as loose boards, rocks, stacked wood or any other materials under which they can hide. This will greatly reduce the numbers of scorpions which will be found in the area.