



GARDEN *pests* IN PERTH

Control Fungus Gnats

The annoying flying insects that are seen buzzing around indoor plants are called Fungus Gnats. These insects are small flies that infest soil, potting mix, and other decomposing organic material. They are not strong fliers and often emerge after watering.

The adult lays its eggs in moist organic material near the surface of the soil. The larvae hatch and feed on fungi and organic matter, however they can also chew on plant roots. Damage to the tender feeder roots can seriously affect the health of the plant. The adult can also spread pythium, a group of plant pathogens that causes seedlings to rot.

They have a short life cycle of just 3-4 weeks so the egg, larvae, pupa and adult can all be present in the soil. Repeated monitoring will be required to ensure there are no surviving eggs and larvae left in the soil.

Symptoms of a Fungus Gnat infection include sudden wilting of the plant, a general loss of vigour, poor new growth and yellowing of the leaves.

Look for adult Fungus Gnats flying around and monitor the condition of all indoor plants.

- Carefully turn over the top of the soil near the base of the plant. Look for grey or transparent larvae.
- Place fresh potato slices into the soil. Larvae will be attracted to the moist organic matter. After a few days, turn over the slices and see if larvae are present and destroy. Repeat the process to capture any newly hatched larvae.
- Make up a gnat trap with 50/50 apple cider vinegar and water, plus a few drops of dishwashing liquid. Stir and pour into a shallow container. Place the trap on top of the soil or near the base of the pot. Check for dead gnats every few days and replace the liquid.
- Use a premium potting mix specially formulated for indoor plants, such as Green Life Indoors. This has diatomaceous earth added to help combat Fungus Gnats.
- Place a layer of stone mulch on top of the soil to prevent the adult laying eggs.
- Don't leave the pot standing in a saucer of water.
- Avoid overwatering, especially in winter as Fungus gnats do best in damp conditions. Allow soil to dry to a depth of 3-5cm between waterings. This kills the larvae, inhibits the egg development, and deters the adult from laying.

This is intended as general information only. Please ask one of our horticulturists for specific advice for your situation.