

## FUNGUS GNAT

Diptera: Sciaridae

*By Eric Day*

**SIZE:** About 1/8 inch (3-4mm).

**COLOR:** Grayish to black.

**DESCRIPTION:** Fungus gnats are flies that are common household pests. They are slender, mosquito-like, and delicate with long legs and one pair of clear wings.

**HABITAT:** They are usually seen flying at windows and around house plants. Homeowners may notice these small flies when watering potted plants.

**LIFE CYCLE:** The larvae of fungus gnats live in moist soil and feed on decaying organic matter. These conditions are abundant outside in the fall season and nearly year round in potted plants.

**TYPE OF DAMAGE:** Although the larvae rarely attack healthy plant roots, they may nibble at a few roots and reduce the vitality of house plants.

**CONTROL:** Control of fungus gnats in the house is relatively simple. Adult fungus gnats are attracted to moist, organically rich soil. Examine all house plants for "over-watered soil." Allowing the soil to dry out for several days (or longer) is probably the best control of these pests. The larvae live in the top layer of soil. If the top layer of soil becomes dry, the larvae will die and the adults will not have a place to lay their eggs.

**INTERESTING FACTS:** Larvae feed on highly organic soils and can damage the roots of bedding plants, African violets, carnations, poinsettias and foliage plants.



Fungus gnat. David Cappaert. Michigan State University. Bugwood.org.