

Carpet beetles are destructive insects often found in the home. In spite of their common name, modern carpets made from mainly synthetic materials are not damaged by these insects. The larvae cause damage, crawling from room to room and living behind baseboards, moldings, and in heating system air ducts, carpets clothing, and furniture. Adult beetles fly readily and may feed outdoors on nectar or flower pollen. Common species are the black carpet beetle (*atragenus megatoma*), the varied carpet beetle (*anthrenus verbasci*), the common carpet beetle (*anthrenus scrophulariae*), and the furniture carpet beetle (*anthrenus flavipes* Le Conte).

### Identification

These insects vary slightly in size and coloration, but generally are similar and difficult to tell apart. Adult black carpet beetles, largest of these beetles, are oval and shiny black, similar to a ladybug, with brownish legs. They vary in body length from 1/8-3/16 inch. Larvae are golden to dark brown and about 1/4-1/2 inch long with the body resembling an elongated carrot or cigar. A long brush of bristles are at the tail end of the larvae.



Varied Carpet Beetle  
Adult (L), Larva (R)



Black Carpet Beetle  
Adult (L), Larva (R)

### Life Cycle and Habits

All carpet beetles pass through the egg, larva, pupa, and adult stages. Adults fly readily and, during warm sunny days, feed outdoors on flower pollen of spires, crepe myrtle and buckwheat. Depending on the species, each female can lay up to 100 or more white eggs, which hatch in eight to 15 days. Eggs laid indoors occur in lint accumulations near the food source, in air ducts, under heavy furniture, underneath baseboards, etc. After hatching larvae begin their destructive feeding, avoiding light and molting several times as they develop. Sixty days to a year or more may be spent in the larval stage feeding, depending on food and temperature. The life cycle is shorter in warm rooms than in an unheated portion of the house during the winter. In the spring, the pupae develop into new adults. Usually there are three to four generations

per year except for the black or varied carpet beetle, which may have one generation per year.

### Carpet Beetles and Modern Carpets

Carpets manufactured today mainly utilize synthetic materials, which do not provide a food source for carpet beetles. In addition, the high temperatures reached in manufacturing are destructive to any insects that might be harbored in fibers or materials.

Wool yarns used in carpet are normally treated with mothproofing chemicals to help resist attacks by beetles. Infestations of beetles, however, should be handled by professional pesticide technicians using appropriate fumigants. More than one application may be necessary, as the unhatched eggs may not be killed by the initial application. If treatment is necessary, make certain that the chemicals used in the treatment will not discolor or damage the carpet. It is important that the pest control firm be knowledgeable in dealing with textile attacking insects and carpet.