

Outdoor Cockroaches

Cockroaches develop by gradual, or incomplete, metamorphosis with life stages consisting of egg, nymph, and adult. Eggs are contained in a purse-like structure called an ootheca. The egg case is usually dropped by the female or glued to a substrate. Nymphs look similar to adults, but are smaller and do not have fully developed wings.



Smokybrown cockroach egg case (ootheca) glued to substrate.

Outdoor cockroaches may enter buildings around loose-fitting doors and windows as well as through sewer lines, attics, and where pipes penetrate the structure. Trees that touch or overhand the home create a bridge for cockroaches to get into the home. Cockroaches are omnivores, feeding on numerous plant and animal products such as meats, starchy foods, baked goods, leather, book bindings and wallpaper paste.

Common cockroaches found outside in this area are American and Smokybrown cockroaches. American cockroaches are about 1 ½ - 2 inches long, reddish-brown with yellow markings on the pronotum (the shield-like structure that covers the head). Adults have well-developed wings, but seldom actively fly; they do often glide from high perches. American cockroaches are usually found outside near decayed trees and plants, in crawl spaces and sewers. Smokybrown cockroaches are often mistaken with American cockroaches. Smokybrowns are about 1 inch long and dark brown to black. Adults have fully developed wings and are capable of flight. This species often inhabits leaf litter, compost piles, and ground cover.



American cockroach adult.



Smokybrown cockroach adult.

If you find cockroaches in your compost pile, in leaf litter or other outdoor locations, it isn't really necessary to kill them. It is a sign that you want to work on some things to keep the cockroaches outdoors when the weather gets chilly.

- Prune back any vegetation touching or overhanging the home
- If you have a brick or stone façade, stuff weep holes with copper mesh
 - copper will not rust and will still allow air flow in and out of void space
- Make sure screens on doors and windows are in good repair
- Replace weather stripping where doorways do not have a good seal
 - If you can see daylight around a door when it is closed, then it does not have a good seal
- Repair any water leaks
- Clean debris from gutters
- Place stainless steel screening over vent access in the attic
- Use sealant around pipe penetrations or other cracks or crevices into the home

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at 512.854.9600. Check out my blog at www.urban-ipm.blogspot.com