

Gardening Basics

Scorpions

In summer you may have problems with scorpions coming into your home. Scorpions are scary looking, and their sting can be painful, but they are controllable. Here's some information about the most common species of scorpion found in Texas, their behavior, habitat, and stings, and how to manage their control.

Quick Facts

1. Scorpions are arachnids, close relatives of ticks, mites, and spiders
2. Their bodies are slender toward the end, with a five segmented tail that has a bulb-like poison gland on the end (stinger)
3. They have four pairs of legs and two pincer-bearing arms in front
4. Although they have many eyes - 2 on top of their head and 2 to 5 pairs along the front corner of the head - they do not see well and rely on the sense of touch and other organs to navigate and find prey
5. The most common scorpion species found in Texas is the Striped Bark Scorpion (*Centruoides vittatus*). It is yellowish tan with two broad dark stripes down its back. The adults are about 2 ½ inches long. Their pincer-arms are slender, and they have a long slender tail.

Biology

Scorpions are nocturnal; they hide during the day and move around at night.

During the day, they hide in small cracks, under stones, bark, wood, and other objects on the ground. They can survive on very little food. They prefer to eat small insects, spiders, centipedes, earthworms, and other scorpions. They use their pincers to crush the prey and pull it towards their mouth to ingest the prey's body juices.

The lifespan of the Striped Bark Scorpion is about four years. They mate in the fall, spring, and early summer, have an eight-month gestation period, and bear several broods averaging 31 young. The young are born alive in a thin sack and climb on their mother's back after escaping the sack, riding there for 3 to 7 days.

Habitat

The Striped Bark Scorpion is found both indoors and outdoors. Their preferred daytime habitat is under rocks, debris, boards, dead vegetation, fallen logs, and human dwellings. They can climb trees or walls and hang out in the attics of homes, but in hot weather, they may move from the hot attic to cooler living areas of the house.

Scorpion Sting

There are hundreds of species of scorpions in the U.S.; however, only 20-25 of them are considered dangerous. The sting of the Striped Bark Scorpion generally produces moderate reactions, with the severity dependent on the individual scorpion and the person's response to the venom. If stung, monitor for allergic reactions, and seek medical attention if swelling or difficulty with breathing occurs. Applying an ice pack to the sting can help reduce the pain.



"Striped Bark Scorpion (*Centruoides vittatus*) with Dinner" by dmills727 is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Management & Control

Pest proofing is the most effective way to reduce contact with scorpions and potential stings. Pesticides alone will not control scorpions. Take these steps to modify the area around your home or other structures:

1. Remove preferred scorpion hiding places like trash, logs, boards, stones, and bricks close to the home or structure.
2. Keep the grass next to the home mowed short.
3. Prune back bushes and tree branches that overhang the roof. These can be a path for scorpions to the roof.
4. Store garbage containers on a structure elevated above the ground.
5. Never store firewood inside the home.
6. Inspect the weather stripping around doors and windows for tight seals.
7. Plug weep holes in stone or brick veneer with steel wool, copper mesh, or nylon scouring pads.
8. Use a sealant under roof eaves, pipes, and other cracks.
9. Inspect window screens for a tight fit and repair tears or holes.
10. Don't store shoes on the floor or the ground, especially outdoors.
11. Don't leave towels or clothing on the floor or the ground, indoors or outdoors.
12. Don't put your hands, fingers, feet, or toes where you can't see.



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Natural pesticides with these active ingredients can control scorpions; however, their residual effect is relatively short: rosemary oil, cinnamon oil, clove oil, thyme oil, and pyrethrum.

Synthetic pesticides have a more prolonged residual effect. Look for these active ingredients: permethrin, cyfluthrin, cypermethrin, lambda-cyhalothrin, deltamethrin, propoxur, carbaryl, or bifenthrin.

Apply a pesticide in the evening when scorpions are most active. Apply around a structure's foundation and on exterior walls up to 1 foot above ground level. Also, treat around doors, windows, and other entry points. For indoors, apply a pesticide labeled for inside use around points of entry, in corners, cracks, and crevices. Always carefully read and follow the product label for mixing instructions, application instructions, and safety precautions.

Resources:

"IPM Action Plan for Bark Scorpions" Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, (accessed March 24, 2025)

<https://schoolipm.tamu.edu/forms/pest-management-plans/ipm-action-plan-for-bark-scorpions/>

"Scorpions, E-362 Fact Sheet" (November 2010), Wizzie Brown. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, (accessed March 24, 2025) <https://counties.agrilife.org/liberty/files/2020/05/Scorpions-Publ.-E-362.pdf>

"Striped Bark Scorpion," Field Guide to Common Texas Insects, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, (accessed March 24, 2025) <https://texasinsects.tamu.edu/striped-bark-scorpion/>

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