

Ground Beetles

(Family Carabidae – *Harpalus*, *Calosoma* and many others)



Pennsylvania ground beetle



Fiery searcher (Ocoquan, VA)



Say's ground beetle

Identification – Ground beetles are one of the most common groups of beetles, with tens of thousands of species worldwide. Most are 1/8 to 3/4 inch long, flattened, shiny black or dark brown, sometimes with a metallic green or bronze sheen, with long legs, thread-like antennae and a narrow head with obvious jaws. They run fast when disturbed. The fiery searcher (caterpillar hunter) is a big one, 1 to 1½ inches, metallic green and black.

Why they're a problem – They really aren't. Ground beetles don't damage the house, food or clothing, and they aren't harmful to people, though a big one may pinch if handled. Outdoors they're beneficial: they hunt other insects, and the fiery searcher is a major predator of tent caterpillars and other leaf-eating caterpillars. Indoors they're just a nuisance that can't live inside for long, so there's no risk of infestation.

What we find – Despite their name, many ground beetles fly, and most people don't realize it. They're active at night and attracted to lights, so we find them on porches, around doors and garages, and inside after flying in an open door or hitchhiking in on someone or something. During the day they hide under mulch, leaves, stones, firewood and debris. They're pretty seasonal; a flurry of them usually lasts only a few weeks. Fiery searchers sometimes show up in large numbers around homes in spring when they're mating, but that only lasts a few days.

What works – The answer is patience, and keeping them out. A few ground beetles indoors don't need any treatment; just remove them. Because they're beneficial and the activity passes quickly, we don't recommend spraying for them as a rule. If large numbers keep getting in, sealing entry points, reducing lights near doors and a routine exterior treatment around the foundation will cut down the numbers.

What you can do – Sweep, vacuum or pick them up and put them outside, and sweep or hose a crowd of them away from doors. Turn off porch and garage lights when you don't need them, or switch to yellow bulbs. Seal gaps under doors, around ground-level windows and in the foundation. Thin the mulch next to the foundation, move firewood away, and clear debris near the walls.

When to call Dynamic – Give us a call if large numbers keep coming in, or if you're not sure it's a ground beetle and not a pest like a cockroach. If you're not sure what you have, send us a photo and we'll identify it for you.