Boxelder bugs cannot bite or sting but may become
nuisance pests when they invade homes. When fall tem-
peratures begin to drop, adults search for protected cracks
and crevices in which to pass the winter. Boxelder bugs near
homes may squeeze into cracks in the foundation, windows,
doors or under siding and shingles. During the coldest part
of the winter the bugs remain inactive, but on warm sun-
ny days in late winter or early spring they begin to return
to activity and start leaving their winter shelter in search of
egg-laying sites. Boxelder bugs may become trapped inside
homes, and although they do not harm household furnish-
ings, they can be annoying when they crawl or fly about the
rooms.

Description
Adult boxelder bugs are approximately 1/2 inch in
length, dark brown to black in color with conspicuous red
markings on their backs. The young (nymphs) are bright red
and wingless but are generally similar in shape to the adults.

Life Cycle
Eggs are usually laid on the bark of boxelder trees but
can also be found on ash, maple, plum, cherry, peach, and
pear. The nymphs, which begin to hatch around June, have
sucking mouthparts and feed by extracting juices from trees.
Boxelder bugs feed and grow until midsummer when they
develop into the adults which lay eggs for the second brood.
Although large numbers of boxelder bugs can sometimes
be observed on host plants, their feeding causes no appreci-
ciable damage to trees. In late fall, mature boxelder bugs will
again migrate from the trees to seek shelter for the winter.

Control Measures
Boxelder bugs prefer the pistillate (seed-bearing) box-
elders, avoiding the staminate ones. Nurserymen should
therefore, propagate boxelders by taking cuttings from sta-
minate trees only.

If only one or two trees of no particular value seem to
be the source of boxelder bug problems their removal might
prove best for long-term boxelder bug control. But remem-
ber that bugs can fly in from elsewhere in a neighborhood.
The wholesale cutting of boxelder bug infested trees is therefore not recommended.

**Spraying Infested Trees:** One of the best controls for boxelder bugs is to spray infested trees during late summer while the second brood of bugs is still immature and concentrated on the trees. Carbaryl (Sevin) and permethrin (Spectracide Bug Stop, Eight) are labeled for this purpose.

**Treating Outdoor Infested Premises:** As boxelder bugs mature and leave the trees, they sometimes mass around foundation walls, along fence rows, at the bases of trees, evergreen shrubs, etc. Hot water (165°-180°F) applied directly to the clusters readily kills them.

Perimeter foundation treatments with chemicals also may provide good control if spray is applied to all surfaces over which the bugs crawl. Several gallons of spray are needed around the average home. Choose any of several insecticides labeled for ‘homeowner use’ as a foundation or outside perimeter treatment against occasional household invading insects.

**Indoor Treatment:** Remember that many times, infestations can be prevented or reduced by closing or sealing any openings through which the bugs can enter from the outside. This includes caulking small cracks and holes in the siding, window and door frames and screening ventilators. Broken doors, windows and screens should also be repaired. Do not forget to inspect entry ways into attics or crawl spaces as these may serve as staging areas for bugs to infest the remainder of the home later.

Once inside the home, boxelder bugs are difficult to control. Household sprays containing pyrethrins or resmethrin may give temporary control. A fly swatter and either a vacuum cleaner or broom and dust pan are often the best way to rid the home of these pests.