

Lawn Shrimp



Lawn shrimp, *Arcitalitrus sylvaticus*. Photo courtesy of Ken Schneider, BugGuide.

The creature commonly known as a *lawn shrimp* actually is more closely related to shrimp than insects. It is an invertebrate in the Class Amphipoda, family Talitridae. Amphipods are crustaceans found primarily associated with the ocean, but a number of species are found in terrestrial habitats.

The lawn shrimp is a non-descript, brown-colored creature. It has two antennae and 10 legs. They can reach a maximum body length of 0.4 inch (1 cm)

There is only one terrestrial amphipod in California, the lawn shrimp, *Arcitalitrus sylvaticus*. It is native to eastern Australia, where it is associated with Eucalyptus. This amphipod is thought to have been introduced into California in the 1800's with blue gum Eucalyptus trees. They were probably present in the soil used to transport the trees.

Lawn shrimp live in the soil and in leaf litter. They are rarely seen except when soil flooding or extreme dryness forces them to search for better conditions. Under the worst conditions, hundreds can be found on pavement or even in homes. In California they can be a sign of overwatering, particularly in lawns.

Adult females carry their fertilized eggs in a pouch on the

underside of their bodies. Once the eggs hatch the hatchlings leave the pouch. They are essentially small versions of the adults.

These amphipods are surprisingly mobile. They have powerful hindlegs modified for jumping, very much like fleas, and are capable of fast jumps of 10-15 inches at a time.

These creatures are harmless; they cannot bite or sting. They only feed on decaying debris, particularly plant material in the soil. Their presence should be viewed more as an indication of environmental or garden conditions than a pest issue. They can be driven from their normal habitats by conditions that are too wet or too dry. No amount of pesticide application will affect them as most of the individuals found on pavement or indoors are already dying or dead.



<http://tlc-smileygirl.blogspot.com/2007/10/we-have-lawn-shrimp.html>