

Your firewood could be “bugged”

Many insects like to overwinter in wood. A wood pile is an ideal place for some insects to survive the winter. They don't know that you intend to bring their winter home indoors during the cold weather.

During the colder weather of fall, winter and early spring, you can unknowingly bring in pests such as spiders, beetles and roaches when you bring in firewood. It's best to bring in firewood only when you are ready to use it. Otherwise, those pests could become active and start crawling around inside your warm house. Many insects are potential problems indoors and there are many choices on control measures once insects move into your home. However, preventing the insects from getting indoors is the best approach.

If you store wood indoors for short periods of time, it's a good idea to clean the storage area after you have used the wood. Using a first-in, first-out guideline as much as possible will reduce your chances of insect problems.

It's best to keep your wood pile off the ground and away from the house. This will make it less inviting to insects and by being dry, the wood will burn better.

It's not difficult to keep the wood off the ground. You can stack the wood on a base of wooden pallets, bricks or blocks which will allow air movement under the wood. It may be more difficult to keep the wood dry; but you can cover it with plastic or store it in a shed. Regardless of how you store your firewood, avoid spraying it with insecticides. When burned, insecticide treated wood may give off harmful fumes.

Some critters that live in firewood can be harmful to humans. To avoid a painful sting or bite from insects, scorpions or spiders, it is a good practice to wear gloves when you pick up logs from a wood pile. None of the several species of scorpions which occur in Florida is capable of inflicting a lethal sting; however, the site of the sting may be sore and swollen for some time.

Firewood can be a good source of heat during our cold weather. If you're careful with how you handle your firewood, hopefully it will warm you, not burn or “bite” you.

Larry Williams, UF/IFAS Extension Agent, Okaloosa County, December 1, 2011