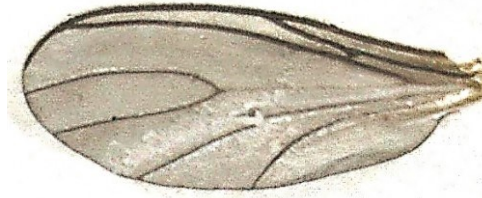


## Fungus Gnats



Dark winged fungus gnat female. Photo courtesy of Robert Webster, Wikipedia.



Fungus gnat wing with typical Y-shaped vein.

Fungus gnats in the family Sciaridae are small, dark colored flies, with pointed abdomens and darkly tinted wings. They have a distinctive Y-shaped vein in the middle of the wing. Adults are generally about 3mm (1/8 inch) long. They are found in the vicinity of larval food sources and are commonly attracted to lights at night.

The larvae are tiny, translucent maggots with a dark head capsule. The maximum body length is 5 mm (0.2 inches).

Fungus gnat larvae typically feed on fungi and other organic debris. However, the larvae of some species will feed on healthy plant tissue. The larvae are commonly found in leaf litter, potted plants and other similar situations with damp, decomposing organic material. They

commonly infest potted plants indoors where they can become an annoyance. These flies can be pests in mushroom growing facilities where they damage mushroom fruiting bodies (mushrooms) as well as hyphae. A variety of biological control agents are used to prevent fungus gnat damage in greenhouses and other grow facilities, including nematodes and mites.

Their larvae can also be pests of plants grown in greenhouses and other high humidity facilities. In these situations they feed on roots, damaging plants. Crops affected by sciarid gnats include potatoes, flower bulbs, ferns, begonias, geraniums and even Cannabis.

Although they resemble small mosquitoes, adult fungus gnats are completely harmless; more of an annoyance than anything else. They do not feed as adults. Their presence is best seen as an indication of a potential problem rather than a danger or pest per se.



Fungus gnat larvae feeding in a rotten potato. Photograph courtesy of Jim Kalisch, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.