

25,000 Bugs Could Be Living In Your Holiday Tree

(December 2017)

For a lot of people, getting a holiday tree is one of the best parts of the yuletide season. You can make a fun family trip to a tree farm or lot. Then, you can spend a long time trimming your tree just right, so you can gaze upon it all month long. Maybe longer! Plus, your home will smell of fresh pine. Yes, a holiday tree is like magic—until you find out there are up to 25,000 insects living within those perfect green branches.

That is right! A fresh cut holiday tree can have hundreds upon hundreds of insects hiding in it. There are aphids, spiders, mites, beetles, and praying mantises. Not exactly who you wanted to invite for the holidays? Do not stress! These insects will not hurt you and you will not be able to spot them. In fact, most of them are microscopic. Any big bugs will want to stay on the tree, but a few could escape to a

lamp for some light. Otherwise, they are not a risk to you or your home. Now that we know the basics, let us get to know your new roommates.

First on the list of holiday tree residents is the aphid. Some aphids look like spiders or ticks, but they only have six tiny legs, and they not bite or sting you. They are not very active, so they like to stay put and dine on parts of the tree.

Bark beetles are next. No, they do not bark like a dog. They just like to make small holes in trees. When they do this, they also happen to make small piles of dust. They will not make holes in your furniture, though. They like the freshness of a fresh cut holiday tree much more.

Mites are all over holiday trees, but they are not as bad as they sound. They tend to live in a holiday tree because a nest used to be in it. Mites will mostly stay put and snack on other insects and eggs they find on the branches around them.

You could spot a praying mantis living in your holiday tree. Mantises are predators, so they will kill and dine on the other bugs in your tree. Other common insects are psocids, scale insects, and spiders. Psocids are happy snacking on mold, pollen, fungus, and other bugs. They will not last long in your home because it is just too warm for them. Likewise, spiders will not live long in your home, so you do not have to give them a second thought.

Some people think the 25,000 number is out of line, and your holiday tree will not have many bugs on it at all. However, if you want to stop bugs from invading your home, shake your tree before bringing it inside. Or, you can use organic insect stuff on your tree before you bring it home. If you are brave, you could just let the insects be. They will likely die out quickly anyway. One thing is for sure: you will have a great holiday season no matter who your visitors will be.

Teacher Resources

Text Easability Scores

If you would like to measure the text easability scores of this passage, please follow the directions below.

1. Visit the Coh-Metrix Text Easability Assessor website at <http://tea.cohmetrix.com/>. If you do not already have a login and password, create one. It is free and easy to sign up for access to the website.
2. Once you have created an account and sign in, you will be taken to a page with an empty, white text box. Copy and paste the text from this passage into the empty, white text box. Make sure you are only copying and pasting the body of the passage. Do not include the title, date, or any of the resources present in the passage.
3. When you have pasted the passage into the text box, click on the red button beneath the text box that says "Analyze." There will be a short delay and after a few seconds, you will see a bar graph appear to the right of the screen.
4. The bar graph will give you the percentages for several text characteristics including: narrativity, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, referential cohesion, and deep cohesion.
5. Below the bar graph, the Flesch Kincaid Grade Level is also included for your benefit.
6. Lastly, a paragraph is provided that explains the meaning of the measurements of the text characteristics for your particular passage.
7. Once you have completed measuring your passage, you can click on the "Clear" button below the text box and measure another passage, if you wish.

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