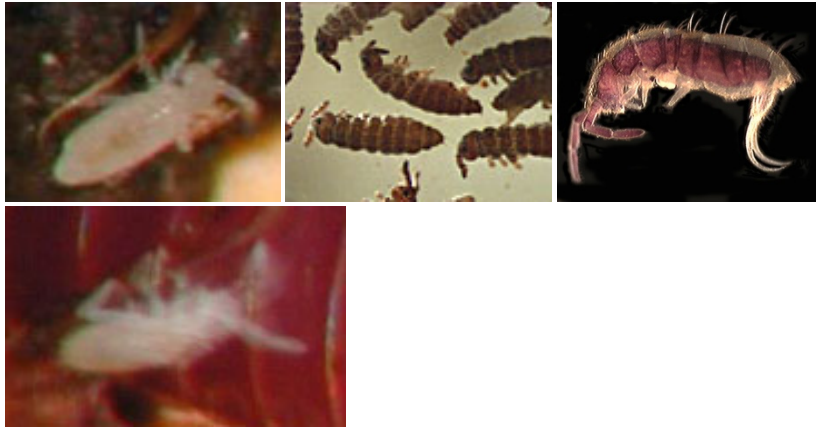




Springtail



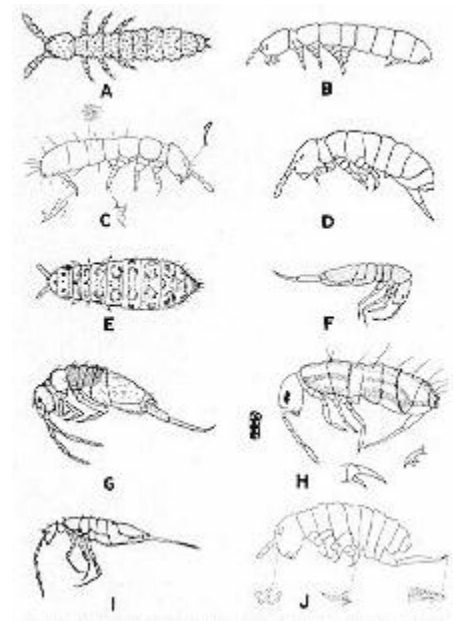
[Click here to see this Springtail on a Redworm!](#)

Springtails are extremely numerous in compost. They are very small wingless insects (the maximum size is 6 mm/0.2 in. in length; 1 to 2 mm/.05 in. avg. length) and can be distinguished by their ability to jump when disturbed. They run in and around the particles in the compost and have a small spring-like structure (called a furcula) under the belly that catapults them into the air when the spring catch is triggered. A springtail 5-6 mm in length can jump 75-100 mm. Springtails that do not have a furcula cannot "spring".

Springtails come in many colors such as white, yellow, gray, red, orange, metallic green, and lavender. They chew on decomposing plants, pollen, grains, and fungi and are beneficial organisms in the bin. Springtails usually diminish in numbers when the bedding dries out a bit.

Classification

- Order Collembola
- Class Insecta
- Phylum Arthropoda.



Controls

For control of springtail populations use *Hypoaspis miles*. This tiny (0.5 mm) light-brown mite naturally inhabits the top 1/2" layer of soil where fungus gnats, as well as springtails and thrips pupae dwell. The female *Hypoaspis* mites lay their eggs in the soil, which hatch in 1-2 days, and the nymphs and adults feed on the soil-dwelling pests.

Each *Hypoaspis* mite will consume 5-20 prey or eggs per day. They survive by feeding on algae and/or plant debris when insects aren't available. Their entire life cycle is 7-11 days.

Further Reading

- More information about the control of springtails
- [Collembola \(springtails\) image](#)
- [Springtails](#), Darryl P. Sanders, Department of Entomology, University of Missouri-Columbia
- [Springtails](#)

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