



Class Insecta, Insects

Order Diptera, Flies, gnats, and midges

Diptera means “two wings,” and true flies bear only one pair of functional wings. Flies are one of the largest insect groups, with approximately 35 families that contain predatory or parasitic species. All flies have piercing/sucking/sponging mouthparts.

Syrphid, hover or flower flies

Family Syrphidae

Description and life history: This large family consists of small to medium flies 6–18 mm long, most of which have yellow and black striped bodies resembling bees or wasps. Adults often hover near flowers and feed on nectar and pollen. Larvae are pale green to yellow maggots resembling slugs and can reach 10–15 mm in length. Larvae pupate on plants or in the soil enclosed in a puparium, which is smooth, tan, and teardrop shaped. There is one generation every 2 to 4 weeks.

Prey species: Adults feed primarily on nectar and pollen. Larvae prey on aphids, scales, and other insects. They may consume up to 400 aphids as larvae. Although they are good natural enemies, they are not available commercially. Encourage hover flies by providing pollen and nectar sources.



Syrphid fly adult. (323)
Photo: David Laughlin



Syrphid fly larva. (W44)
Photo: Whitney Cranshaw



Syrphid fly larva. (324)
Photo: David Laughlin



Syrphid fly larva pressed with glass to force out mouth hooks on left. (325) Photo: John Davidson



Syrphid fly egg. (326)
Photo: David Laughlin