

Latin name : *Pyrrhocoris apterus*

Size : 1cm

Lifespan : 12 months

Firebug

The fire bugs in French are called “gendarmes”. They take their name from the 18th-century French military guards who wore orange-red and black coats. Gendarmes love the heat, earning them other nicknames such as *cherche-midi* or *la punaise au corps de feu*.



The firebug is a bug in a class of its own because it emits no nauseating odour. It does not bite or cause hypersensitivity. It is therefore harmless on contact. It has a biting-sucking mouth cavity which it uses only to suck the liquids from its food. It feeds on aphids, mealybugs and other garden pests. It also helps dead leaves and insect corpses to decompose more quickly. So it's an invaluable ally in garden maintenance.

Firebugs mate for 12 hours to a few days. Entomologists think this is a way of avoiding competition, because by the time they separate, the eggs have already been fertilised.