

What's Eating You? Flat Rock Scorpion (*Hadogenes granulatus*)

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The flat or granulated rock scorpion, *Hadogenes granulatus* (Figure), is native to Africa, especially Mozambique. Because it has a relatively mild sting (similar to a wasp or bee), it is one of the scorpions commonly sold and kept as pets. Other scorpions commonly kept as pets include the Java forest scorpion (*Heterometrus javanensis*), the shiny burrowing scorpion (*Oposthophalmus glabrifrons*), the Tanzanian redclaw scorpion (*Pandinus cavimanus*), the Thai black scorpion (*Heterometrus spinifer*), and the West African emperor



Flat rock scorpion.

or imperial scorpion (*Pandinus imperator*). Although I do not own a pet scorpion, nor advocate owning one, the practice is fairly common, and stings from exotic species commonly occur in temperate climates.

Similar to spiders, scorpions are arachnids. They belong to the order Scorpiones. The arachnid group also contains the order Araneae (spider), Uropygi (whip scorpion), and Amblypygi (tailless whip scorpion).

South Africa is home to one of the world's most dangerous scorpions, *Parabuthus transvaalicus* (the South African fattail scorpion).¹⁻⁴ It also is home to the genus *Hadogenes*, containing some of the

world's least venomous scorpions. Members of the genus grow to impressive sizes, with some attaining lengths of more than 21 cm. A few members of the genus are reported to spray venom in self-defense. Venom sprayed into the eyes can be quite painful and might impair vision. *H granulatus* is a relatively nonvenomous scorpion with a bulky cephalothorax, a broad-segmented abdomen, and a long thin delicate tail-like structure called a telson. This species is not known to spray venom. Because their eyesight is poor, scorpions depend heavily on vibration-sensing organs, including the hairs located on the surface of the pedipalps (pincers) and pectines (comblike organs under the body). Scorpions will erect their tails in response to vibration and strike if threatened. Although the sting of *Hadogenes* scorpions is very mild, they possess a pair of large powerful pedipalps reported to be capable of splitting fingernails. Therefore, they should be handled with care. Allergic reactions to other scorpions have been reported with venom-specific immunoglobulin E immunoblotting.^{5,6} Allergy is a potential problem with any

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stinging arthropod, but the complete absence of data on this particular species in the medical literature suggests problems are rare. Treatments for split nails and the usual mild sting reactions are largely symptomatic. Ice, topical anesthetics, and analgesics may be warranted.

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