

PestGazette

SUMMER 2017

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Bees vs. Wasp

In the summer months, backyard barbecues are often visited by uninvited stinging insects. Stinging insects send more than half a million people to emergency rooms each year and most of these stings are caused by wasps and hornets. Although capable of stinging, under normal circumstances, bees play a beneficial role in the backyard.

The vast majority of stings that occur in North America are inflicted by social wasps or hornets. Social wasps and hornets live communally in nests that can range in size from small to extremely large. When threatened or disturbed, these pests will respond aggressively to defend the nest with repeated stings to the offending party.

Social bees, with the exception of Africanized

honey bees, are rarely aggressive and almost always considered beneficial. Bumble bees and honey bees are often seen buzzing from one flower to the next in backyard gardens. Each plays an important role transferring pollen from one flower to the next. Without this important service, most of the fruit and vegetables that we rely on for food would be non-existent. On a commercial scale, honey bees also provide products like honey and beeswax.

Nevertheless, stings sometimes happen. If you are stung, remove the stinger with a fingernail or tweezers, ice the area and take an over-the-counter pain reliever if necessary.

For more information about bees, wasps and other pollinators, visit www.pollinatorhealth.org.

What's the Buzz on Mosquitoes?

Expect to see more mosquitoes this summer than usual. That's because the recent mild winter and wet spring provided the perfect storm of conditions for mosquitoes to start breeding sooner, giving them a jumpstart on the year. Higher numbers of mosquitoes in your backyard can be more than just a nuisance, because mosquitoes transmit several diseases including West Nile virus, dengue fever and Zika. Here are some steps you can take to protect yourself and reduce mosquito populations around your home.

Nearly all female mosquitoes must feed on blood to get the nutrients necessary to produce eggs. With more hungry mosquitoes flying around,

it is important to protect yourself and your family from these biting pests. Try to cover all exposed skin with long sleeves and pants when you plan on spending time outdoors where mosquitoes may be present. If keeping completely covered isn't practical, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control recommends applying mosquito repellents that contain the active ingredients DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE), or IR3535.

Eliminating mosquito breeding sites around your home is another important step to reducing populations. Mosquitoes require standing water to breed because their larvae are aquatic. Different *continued on page 2*

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Mulch Madness

Laying down a fresh coat of mulch is usually at the top of everyone's list of summertime chores. Mulching is a great way to keep your lawn looking fresh while providing a whole host of benefits to your landscape. No matter what type of substrate you use (wood chips, pine straw, bark, compost, ect.), an added layer of mulch locks in moisture, provides insulation for trees and shrubs and can even improve soil condition as mulch breaks down over time.

Unfortunately, those same benefits that mulch provides to your landscape, it also provides to pests such as cockroaches, ants, millipedes and even termites. Insects look for three key resources: food, water and shelter. A thick layer of mulch offers pests a humid habitat with more than enough places to hide from predators and the hot summer sun. As the much breaks down, it also can serve as a food source for many insects, keeping them happy and healthy. Lastly, the combination of these factors also can make mulch an ideal breeding site for pests, increasing their numbers around your home.

Luckily, there are a few steps you can take to prevent your landscape from becoming an oasis for pests this summer. First, do not over-mulch. A two-inch layer of fresh mulch over damp soil can hold enough moisture for plants, but not enough to attract large numbers of insects. Also, be sure to remove the previous year's mulch before applying a new layer. Lastly, pull mulch away from the house. Leaving a six-inch band of exposed soil around the foundation of your home creates a dry environment that is less conducive to pests.

These simple tips can get you on the right track to a pest free home. However, some insects may be attracted to your home for other reasons. If you do find ants, termites, or any other pests have taken up residence on your property this summer, call us to take care of all your pest control needs. ■

Mosquitoes (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)



species may prefer different types of water sources to lay their eggs, but most larvae can develop in stagnant pools that are less than half an inch deep. If water is present for more than five days in a row, it has the potential to breed mosquitoes. Many of the items commonly found in your backyard such as empty pots and bird-baths are ideal water-holding containers for mosquitoes. In addition, clogged gutters or even low areas in your yard can turn into water reservoirs that mosquitoes could breed in. So, the key is to not let any water stagnate on your property. Inspect your yard frequently for low areas or items such as bottles, barrels, or other vessels that may hold water. Tip over any water containing items regularly to prevent larvae from making it to adulthood, and to reduce the number of mosquito breeding sites around your home.

Follow these simple steps to protect yourself and your family from mosquitoes. But, you can't control all the conditions in your neighborhood. Call us today so that we can help protect your family by treating the areas around your home where adult mosquitoes commonly rest. ■

'Bee' Ready for Carpenter Bees!

In the warm spring and summer months, carpenter bees are a common occurrence around gardens, decks and patios. Like other native bees, they are essential pollinators for native plant communities and can play an important role in crop pollination. Unlike native bees, however, carpenter bees nest in tunnels chewed into wood, and can be destructive when nests are constructed in wooden siding, decks, fence posts, or other wooden structures.

Carpenter bees are often confused with bumble bees because of similarities in both size and color. However, carpenter bees have smooth, shiny black abdomens without fuzz whereas bumble bees tend to be fuzzy all over.

Carpenter bees get their common name from their nesting habits. Eastern species prefer to nest in soft woods such as cedar, redwood, cypress, pine, and fir. Western species are more commonly found nesting in hard woods such as oak, eucalyptus, and redwood. Despite their preferences, all species of carpenter bees are much less likely to nest in painted or pressure treated lumber of any type.

Carpenter bees overwinter as adults in nest tunnels and emerge in mid to late spring. After mating, the female locates a suitable nest site and begins by chewing a perfectly round entrance hole into the wood. She then excavates tunnels about five inches long that are provisioned with balls of pollen to serve as food for the larvae, and the tunnels are sealed. The larvae feed and develop in the tunnels before emerging as adults in late

summer and the process begins again. Mated females may enlarge and reuse old nest tunnels for egg laying or excavate new tunnels. Considerable damage can occur to wood that has been utilized as a nesting site year after year.

Knowing how to identify carpenter bees and their nesting habits is key to protecting your home and your property from costly wood damage. First, you can recognize the entrance to a carpenter bee nest because the hole is about a half inch in diameter and looks perfectly drilled. Second, carpenter bees make quite a mess when excavating a nest by leaving deposits of leftover wood below the hole. They also can cause noticeable staining to the area outside the entrance with yellow/brown pollen and feces. Lastly, male bees are often seen hovering around or just outside of the nest entrance in order to protect the female inside the nest. So, spotting a hovering carpenter bee could indicate that a nest is nearby.

Both male and female carpenter bees can be territorial and may dive bomb anyone that comes near their nest. However, female carpenter bees rarely sting unless provoked. Males do not have a stinger and do not sting at all. Still, most homeowners do not want to have aggressive insects around to potentially cause damage to structures. Make sure to contact us at the first signs of bee activity on your property to identify, treat, and prevent further carpenter bee damage to your home. ■

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Keep the **STING** Out of Summer

The word yellowjacket is synonymous with pain, and can be enough to make you squirm with the thought of discomfort. Summer is the time when these stinging insects increase in numbers in both rural and urban environments across North America. Yellowjacket queens mate in the fall and spend the winter months overwintering in a protected spot, often in structural voids. When they emerge in the spring, the queens begin building a nest where they will raise the first generation of their brood. Once these wasps reach adulthood, they are ready to take on the responsibilities of a worker wasp: expanding the nest, foraging for food, and protecting the colony.

Adult yellowjackets are pollinators, searching for nectar and other sweets. However, they also collect protein-packed foods like insect grubs or even your picnic lunch, which they bring back to the nest and feed to the larvae.

Yellowjackets vary in size depending on the species, but most generally range in length from 1/2" to 5/8" with a rounded body that is slightly wider than the head. The pattern of yellow markings on the thorax and abdomen, the insect's

torso, are unique and can be useful in differentiating between species. Unlike honey bees, yellowjackets and other stinging wasps are capable of, and willing to, sting repeatedly and pursue perceived threats.

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Nests are typically below ground, but some species will nest aerially. Aerial nesting yellowjackets make use of trees, attics, and other places that offer some confining spaces. The ground nests are particularly troubling because they can easily go unnoticed. Children playing catch in the yard, or someone mowing a lawn may inadvertently disturb the nest and incur the unfortunate wrath of these stinging pests. Trust us, if you get too close to a yellowjacket nest, they will let you know! Unlike honey bees, yellowjackets and other stinging wasps are capable of, and willing to, sting repeatedly and pursue perceived threats. Don't risk your health trying to treat or remove nests yourself; do the right thing and call us today to come and take care of it for you and your family. ■