

PestGazette



Summer Thriller...The Cicada Killer

It's late July or early August and cicadas have emerged. You hear the males calling to females every summer evening; that low humming, rhythmic buzzing can be quite annoying or can signify summer's dog days coming to an end. What you don't hear during the day is the cicada's biggest predator, the cicada killer. But, your children see them and are frightened by these huge black and yellow hornets, buzzing around mounds of sandy dirt in the front yards of your suburban home. Cicada killers, or giant ground hornets, are among the largest wasps in the U.S. (up to 1.5 inches in length). They are conspicuous insects, since the males are territorial and will butt or grapple with intruders including other males.

The female cicada killer digs up to 4-foot long burrows in the ground and these burrows have several pockets. She then busies herself gathering and provisioning the cells with cicadas. To dig her burrow, the

fertilized female uses her front legs to rake the soil, pushing it out behind her with her hind legs, resulting in the large dirt mounds you see peppering your otherwise well-manicured yard. One to four cicadas per cell are deposited, depending on the size of the cicada. Cicada killers are generally considered beneficial insects since they destroy the plant feeding cicadas

Male cicada killers have no stingers, but can be quite territorial and aggressive and are often the insect you encounter in your yard. To be stung by a female, one would almost have to place a finger down into the burrow and stings are very rare. If young children are present in the breeding areas one may want to discourage the presence of cicada killers. This can be done by eliminating or reducing the breeding area, which usually consists of exposed, sandy soil. This area can be mulched or covered with grass. Call us today for treatment of the involved areas.

Carpenter Bees Can Nest in Lawn Furniture, Fence Posts and Trees

This summer, you may have found yourself asking, "Where are those 1/2 inch diameter holes in my banister or under my eaves or in my lawn furniture coming from? And what are those big bees that are buzzing around? My kids are swatting them back and forth with tennis rackets!

I've just noticed them this summer." If it is May, June, or early July, a best bet is that you are seeing carpenter bees as they attempt to mate and females build a nest by tunneling into wood to lay their eggs.

The adult carpenter bee, at first glance, looks very much like a bumblebee and is

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Carpenter Bees (continued from page 1)

often confused as such. It is large, about one inch long, has yellow hairs on its body, and the top side of the abdomen is black or blue-black. It differs from a bumblebee in that the top of its abdomen (body) appears to be shiny, smooth and black. Like a bumblebee, carpenter bees help to pollinate flowers and are, therefore, at least in one aspect, beneficial.

Of the two species of carpenter bees in Eastern United States only one causes structural damage. It is found all along the East Coast and west to Texas and Kansas. The lower section of the “face” is yellow on the male and black on the female. Two species can also attack structures in the West.

The “structural damage” you see is a nest, a tunnel in solid wood. From the exterior of the wood all you can see is an almost perfectly round hole, 1/2 inch in diameter. The entrance hole most commonly occurs on the lateral facing of a timber. Carpenter bees receive no nourishment from the wood. They use the wood as a nesting site only. To do this, they must build tunnels within the wood. As the female chews a hole in the wood, she throws away small chunks of wood, sometimes creating a coarse pile of sawdust.

The initial tunneling normally goes straight into the wood across the grain for a distance of 1/2 to 1-1/2 inches, and then makes a right angle turn. The nest itself can run in a vertical or horizontal plane, depending upon which way the grain of the wood runs. The length

of a tunnel inside the wood averages four to six inches, but may range from a fraction of an inch (“false starts”) to six or even ten feet long. The latter is the result of several bees using the same nest. The bee can chew through the wood at the rate of about 1/2 inch per day. There is only one entrance to this nest, the small hole you see.

Carpenter bee females will select their nest site one of three ways: build a new nest, select an old nest already finished or select an old nest and expand upon it. By far, the most common wood attacked is redwood, but carpenter Bees will also infest white pine, cedar and cypress. The Western Mountain Carpenter Bee, frequently nests in Douglas fir and fir trees. Outdoors, carpenter Bees can nest in telephone poles, fence posts, signs, water tanks, and wooden lawn furniture.

Painted wood is less susceptible to attack than non-painted or well-weathered wood. Once the bees are inside the wood, painting it will not stop the bees from subsequently emerging.

Though rather large and fierce in appearance, the adult female is capable of producing a painful sting, but seldom does. She usually must be handled before she can be provoked into stinging. Adult male carpenter bees cannot sting, but they will often buzz near your head and act aggressively, especially if you approach the nest, and certainly can cause a bit of a fright.

Call us today for proper treatment. Control is successful only when the nest is located and treatment is applied directly into the nest. New infestations from bees at a later date can reoccur because re-infestation of the same piece of wood is a common occurrence. Our technicians are trained to look for the signs of infestation and to treat accordingly; you can certainly help out by following the bees to determine where the entrance holes are located. The technician will need to treat and then most likely return a few days later to plug the hole with plastic wood, putty, or a similar substance. ■



Flying Squirrels

It's night time in mid-summer, and you hear scratching and funny noises coming from the attic. You're a bit unnerved by this, so you wait until morning to investigate. When you go into the attic, you find some baby flying squirrels sleeping along a rafter and nestled in the insulation near an open eave. This can be a common summer occurrence in heavily forested neighborhoods, especially if trees are near the roofline of the home.

Flying squirrels typically live in tall trees in the forests of North America. By gliding through the air among the trees, they avoid ground predators but are still vulnerable to attack by hawks and owls. Flying squirrels are nocturnal (active at night) when they feed. Flying squirrels have large eyes that allow them to see clearly in the dark. Their keen eyesight, their acute hearing, and their long, sensitive whiskers, enable them to locate food.

Flying squirrels feed on most types of vegetation. In addition to nuts and seeds, they eat buds, shoots, soft fruit, lichens, and fungi. They also eat insects, spiders, and birds' eggs and nestlings.

At dawn flying squirrels return to hollow trees, abandoned woodpecker holes, or outbuildings and spend most of the day sleeping. The number of squirrels in an area depends on the supply of suitable places to rest and sleep during the day. A problem arises when what they perceive to be the hollow of a tree is actually a void area in your home. Attics and wall voids provide all the creature comforts of a tree hollow and sometimes more in terms of shelter and warmth. Call our company for an inspection and assessment as to how they may be entering your home. Exclusion measures and trapping may be recommended for flying squirrels. ■



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The southern flying squirrel



The southern flying squirrel



Grandma's Real Old-Fashioned Natural Lemonade

From...Yankee Harvest Recipes

Makes about 8 cups

It's a hot summer day, breezes just barely moving, and you're sitting in a rocking chair or porch swing, on the cool shaded front porch. You are sipping an ice cold glass of lemonade. It can't get any better than that. Not a care in the world. Enjoy the lazy day...!

- Lemon Juice, freshly squeezed from 8 large lemons (1-1/2 cups)
- 1/2 cup of sugar, granulated - more or less to taste
- 5 cups cold water
- 1 large lemon, cut into small wedges or thin cartwheel slices

Freshly made ice cubes. Make fresh ice cubes, as they may pick up freezer odors over a period of time, if not used regularly. In a large pitcher, combine the freshly squeezed lemon juice, granulated sugar and 2 cups of cold water; stir briskly to dissolve the sugar. Add the remaining ingredients and stir briskly again.

To make a Honey Flavored Lemonade: Substitute your favorite "honey" for the granulated sugar. Adjust more or less to taste.

To make a Pink Lemonade: Add a few drops of grenadine syrup.

If you suspect any pest activity, call our office before the pest concern becomes a major infestation.

Ten Tips to Keep Children Safe this Summer

- 1 Always know where your children are playing and who they are with.
- 2 Never back out of your driveway without first looking behind your car for children and toys.
- 3 Keep children away from bar-b-que grills.
- 4 Encourage your children to let you know if they see bees or hornets and teach them to never touch these insects.
- 5 Keep all lawn fertilizers and liquids, household cleaners, pool chemicals, and gasoline out of the reach of children.
- 6 Examine your children for ticks when they come inside for the night after playing in the yard or natural areas.
- 7 Post your pediatrician's contact phone number on your refrigerator or in a visible spot and always give this information to your babysitters.
- 8 Check your deck, patio, and yard for tripping hazards such as protruding nails in decks and sprinklers in the yard.
- 9 When our technicians arrive on site, it is natural for inquisitive children to want to watch. For safety reasons, please keep children at a distance while work is being performed and do not let them climb on service vehicles. If time permits, our trained technician will be very happy to discuss the pests and what is done to control them with you and your children. Children usually are fascinated by habits of insects.
- 10 If you suspect any pest activity, call our office before the pest concern becomes a major infestation.