

PestGazette

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How does your garden grow?

For many, springtime means it's time to get outside and start gardening, landscaping, and fixing those little problems that you've been putting off for years. I think we can all agree that these are great activities and fantastic way to enjoy the outdoors. However, there are some things to consider before you start digging or moving soil away from the foundation. You might be disrupting a barrier treatment put in place to prevent termites from reaching your house. Although minor disturbances to treated zones are nothing to worry about, major disruptions can jeopardize the effectiveness of your treatment and put your home at risk.

Maybe this year you've decided to add some mulch and put in some new plants around your home. While this may make your property look more attractive, you are also making your yard more attractive to pests! Mulch provides protection, warmth and traps moisture; three great things for plants but termites also love the warmth, protection, moisture and yes, wood, that comes with mulch. Others, like cockroaches and earwigs also like to spend time in and amongst mulch. If you would like to use mulch, it's best to keep it a foot or two away from

the structure. In fact, any wood in contact with the soil and your foundation is considered to be a major risk factor for termites. If you have any questions about disturbing termite treatments or suspect that you see termite activity, please give us a call! ■



Keep mulch at least one foot away from the foundation of your home to keep wood destroying insects and other pests away from the structure.

Bottle Flies

If you notice a brilliantly-colored, metallic-looking fly buzzing around your home, you probably have a bottle fly, a common type of large fly known for their metallic blue or green color. Despite their beautiful look, a fly at least-appearance, these are not the kind of insect you want to invite inside. Bottle flies breed in and amongst fish and can track disease on the surfaces on which they land. These insects are the first ones to find the carcasses of dead animals; as soon as the bottle fly finds a carcass, it lays eggs and the maggots develop by consuming it. Additionally, bottle flies will lay eggs on human food (including meat), animal waste, and garbage. These flies have

a very short life cycle and can go from egg to adult in less than three weeks!

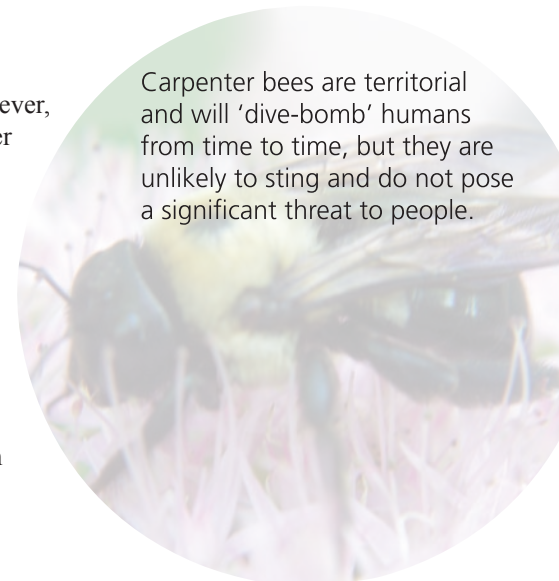
As you can imagine, finding bottle flies is a pretty good indication that there is some other type of problem present. You may have a dead animal on your property, perhaps even in a crawl space or wall void, or sanitation issues, that should be addressed. The sight of bottle flies inside your house may just be an indication that insects are capable of finding their way inside, but could also be due to a more serious problem. Don't let what appears to be an insignificant nuisance turn into something more substantial: call us today!

Carpenter Bees

When you hear the word 'bee,' you most likely think about honeybees, which are social and largely-beneficial insects. However, there is a solitary and destructive bee species called the carpenter bee. There are 7 species distributed throughout North America but you may have never noticed them because carpenter bees closely resemble their relative, the bumble bee. Carpenter bees are robust and large, measuring a half inch to nearly an inch long, with a hairy body. The main difference in appearance between the two is found on the abdomen; carpenter bees have a shiny, often metallic-tinged abdomen, unlike the hairy ones found on bumble bees. Only females have stingers, though they are unlikely to sting unless threatened or handled roughly. Carpenter bees are territorial and will 'dive-bomb' humans from time to time, but do not pose a significant threat to people.

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Carpenter Bees (continued from page 1)

Painted or varnished wood is rarely attacked by carpenter bees, so that is a preventative option for homeowners worried about carpenter bee damage

The reason carpenter bees received their name is also the reason they are considered structural pests. In the spring, female carpenter bees chew into dry wood, commonly lumber and logs. These bees aren't eating wood, they are actually excavating narrow tunnels for egg-laying purposes. Galleries, which are 4 to 6 inches deep, contain 6 cells, and have round entrances that are about a half inch around. Mother carpenter bees provide some great parental care and provision each cell with a single egg, pollen and nectar, a combination called 'bee bread'. Eggs hatch and larvae develop in their cells, eating their bee bread and growing until they reach adulthood. In the late summer, the bees exit the gallery one by one and set out to mate. In order to survive the winter, they will hide in old galleries until spring.

Gallery openings are very noticeable and pretty easy to identify. Unfortunately, the same piece of wood can be exploited by many carpenter bees during the same year and new holes will be excavated in following years. A single wooden beam can be riddled with holes, which is not only unsightly, but it can also encourage other pests to exploit those openings.

There are a few things that can be done to prevent the wood on the exterior of your house from being attacked. Painted or varnished wood is



rarely attacked, so that is a preventative option for homeowners worried about carpenter bee damage, especially if you have found evidence of these bees elsewhere on your property. If you have noticed holes in wood around your home, or are concerned about the possibility of your new deck being damaged this spring, please give us a call. We can confirm suspected carpenter bee damage and make preventative treatments that will repel carpenter bees. Don't let your home become a target for these wood-destroying insects! ■



Always check kids and yourself thoroughly after spending time outdoors, especially if you were out amongst tall grasses and vegetation

Tick Check

As spring arrives, most people can't wait to get outside and enjoy the warmer weather. Of course, we humans are not the only ones with this mindset. Throughout much of the country, immature ticks use this opportunity to 'quest' for a host. This means that they will climb up to the top of tall grasses and hold their legs up toward the sky. When a dog, deer, or person brushes by them, the tick will hold on tight and stay on the host until they've consumed a full meal ... of blood! Ticks have 4 life stages, egg, larva, nymph and adult. In order to move from one life stage to the next, they have to consume blood from a host. Ticks are categorized by the number of hosts they need to complete their life cycle and most require 3 or 4. Once fully engorged, which can mean a tick weighs 200-600 times what it did before the meal, a tick will drop off of the host, digest its food and

molt. Once molted (and now hungry again!), the tick will resume questing behavior.

Remember to always check yourself thoroughly after spending time outdoors, especially if you were out amongst tall grasses and vegetation. Ticks, especially immature ones, can be hard to see so you may need someone to help inspect. If you have pets that venture outdoors, be sure to inspect them too! If you have been feeling ill or uncharacteristically weak and tired, seek medical advice as you may have contracted a tick-borne illness like Lyme disease or Rocky Mountain spotted fever.

Tick management is not always straightforward but you can reduce tick numbers on your property by keeping your lawn short. If you have any questions about ticks or tick management, please give us a call for the latest technical information! ■



Paper Wasps

You may notice some unwelcomed guests inside your house in the next few weeks, especially around windows and doors. Upon closer inspection you might become alarmed when you see that there are wasps in your home! If you observe them, you will see that they are most likely sluggish and a bit disoriented even. There is good news and bad news in this situation. The good is that the wasp has no interest in harming you and just wants to find its way outside. The bad news is, this particular wasp is a queen that already mated in the fall and is looking to start a new colony, probably on the exterior of your home! Of course, it's not in your best interest to let that happen! Let us know if you have found any wasps inside so we can keep our eye out for any nest construction and nip it in the bud.

Paper wasp nests are very common and pretty easy to identify. They are usually constructed on the underside of eaves, external air conditioners, structural corners and window sills. Paper wasp nests are made from chewed wood pulp, plant matter and saliva and do look like they were made from grey and brown paper. The nest is connected to the structure by a small stalk and hangs down, umbrella-like with many cells visible. Paper wasps are capable of delivering a painful sting and should be regarded as dangerous. Don't risk your health, or the health of your family, call us today to take care of any stinging insect problems before they materialize! ■



Ouch! Paperwasps can deliver a doozy of a sting so steer clear of nests (above) and call in the professionals.