Don’t Invite these Carpenters into Your Home: Carpenter Ants

Flowers are springing from the ground and ants have started trailing around your home—spring has arrived! Ants currently hold the prized #1 position as the top nuisance pest in the United States. Thus, it is very likely that you may encounter ants in your home at some point this spring and into the summer. While there are over 50 species of ants that may infest homes, there are a few in particular that are common invaders. One of the more typical ants that you may encounter as temperatures warm up are carpenter ants.

Carpenter ants are a large species, ranging from a quarter to half-an-inch in length. A common misconception about carpenter ants is that they eat wood. However, they do not feed on wood but actually eat protein and sugary sources. They do cause damage to wood in homes though, because they tunnel into wood to dig galleries and create nests for egg laying. Wood that has been previously damaged or has a high moisture content can be even more problematic because it will be more attractive to carpenter ants for tunneling. You will be more likely to have nests of carpenter ants in your home around sinks, bathtubs, windows, doors, and other areas that could be affected by water leaks.

Aside from damaged wood, you may also see swarms of carpenter ants in your home in the springtime. These winged carpenter ants will emerge from their nests in spring to mate and is a sure sign that you may have a colony of carpenter ants nesting somewhere inside your home. There can be multiple nests inside of a home and the extensiveness of the damage is dependent on how long the ants have been in the wood and how many nests are present. Aside from having carpenter ants in the home, there may also be related parent colonies outdoors in a tree stump, under a woodpile or even from a nest hidden behind a wall that may be the main nest and need to be removed. Give us a call today to assess any damaged wood and to evaluate any suspicious ant activity.
When we think of spring cleaning, we don’t always extend our efforts to the backyard. However, there are some simple steps that you can take on the exterior of the structure that will help to reduce the likelihood of pests invading this spring.

**Trim Weeds**
Weeds around the foundation of the house can provide access to the building, hide evidence of infestation and trap moisture. Even though it might not be time to mow the entire lawn, the weeds adjacent to the foundation may need to be trimmed to eliminate this pest friendly environment. Vegetation next to the foundation can also make it difficult for termite inspectors to get a close look at the foundation wall, which is a primary access point for termites to enter a structure.

**Rake Up Leaves**
Removing the old leaves that have collected against the foundation of your home, under the deck, and inside the window wells will eliminate potential hiding and feeding places for many occasional invaders like millipedes, ants, sowbugs and beetles. Leaves trap moisture and provide food for pests that feed on them as they decay.
Sowbugs, Pillbugs, and Roly Polys Oh My!

As the weather warms up, bugs will come out of hiding throughout your house. You will probably come across many bugs in your home in the basement and in garages, especially the family of pillbugs. Sowbugs and pillbugs are very similar and look almost identical, the only difference is that pillbugs roll into a ball while sowbugs do not. These bugs are often collectively called roly polys because of their behavior of rolling up into a tight ball when disturbed.

Clean Up Debris
It might go without saying, but any debris that is lying in the yard can become a harborage area for insects like ants, crickets, sowbugs, and even rodents. Rats will often dig burrows beneath piles of debris because it provides shelter from predators. Firewood and brush piles should be relocated as far from the structure as practical. Ants like odorous house ants and acrobat ants will often nest beneath pieces of wood or other discarded items. Even termites can be attracted to wood scraps and firewood that is stored adjacent to a structure.

Remove Standing Water
Improper drainage around the foundation of a structure can result in standing water which can be attractive to many different pests. Mosquitoes are especially troublesome in locations where manmade pools of standing water are present. Some species, like the Asian tiger mosquito, specialize in locating and identifying temporary breeding locations and can deposit eggs in water sources as small as a bottle cap. The adult mosquito will lay its eggs in stagnant water like bird baths, clogged gutters, unused flowerpots and other containers in the backyard. The larvae develop rapidly, and breeding populations of these daytime biting mosquitoes can become established on a property very quickly.
No Fleas Please!

Fleas can be a nuisance and problem any time of year, but springtime begins their busy season and prompts early sightings and bites. These pests can be brought into your home on cats, dogs or even rodents or other small mammals seeking shelter.

Fleas are small, typically one sixteenth of in an inch, reddish-brown, wingless, blood-sucking insects. Their bodies are laterally compressed, (i.e., flattened side-to-side) permitting ease of movement through the hairs on their host’s body. Their legs are long and well adapted for jumping and the mouthparts of an adult flea are adapted for sucking blood from a host. The female adult needs a blood meal to lay eggs and other life stages need blood to complete development and survive.

Fleas associated with pets can be treated by properly applying products directly to the pet using a “spot-on” or by using oral medications after consulting with a veterinarian. However, there can still be fleas outdoors doing well in wildlife and rodent populations. If a pet is not responsive to treatment or misses treatments, there are opportunities for fleas to infest a home. The interior and exterior of the home may need to be treated if an infestation occurs to gain proper control. We recommend you give us a call so that we can provide suggestions and treatments to eliminate your flea problems.