



Our Insect Enemies



Guarding Against Sinister Stingers

(NAPSA)—It's that time of year again, when unwelcome pests put a stinger in everyone's fun. Stinging insects such as yellow jackets, hornets and wasps are most active in late summer and well into fall. More than just a seasonal nuisance, these pests can pose a significant threat to your health as well. According to the National Pest Management Association (NPMA), stinging insects send more than 500,000 people to the emergency room every year.

Yellow jackets, which have a yellow and black face/head and patterned abdomen, are considered one of the more dangerous stinging insects due to their unpredictable and aggressive nature. They build their nests in the ground or cavernous areas but frequently invade human space in search of sugary and protein-rich foods. They sting repeatedly when their nest is disturbed and reactions can be severe.

Carpenter bees resemble bumblebees and create nests by drilling tunnels into soft wood. Over time, these tunnels can severely compromise the structural stability of a home. Males are in charge of guarding the habitat, but only their female counterparts have stingers. Females will only sting if threatened, but reactions to these stings can range from mild irritation to life-threatening respiratory disease.

A lesser-known stinging insect is the velvet ant. Despite its name, it is actually a wasp. With short, brightly colored hairs (generally red and black), they can be seen running in open areas.



Courtesy of National Pest Management Association/Gene White

There are ways to protect yourself from stinging insects and the allergic reactions they can cause.

Females lay eggs directly in the habitat of ground-nesting bees and wasps. Only the males have wings, but what the females lack in wings, they make up for in stings. Females use a needlelike stinger to inflict a painful poke that can cause allergic reactions.

The NPMA offers these tips for avoiding stinging insects:

- Wear shoes, especially in grassy areas.
- Overseed grassy areas to get better coverage, as this will deter ground-nesting insects.
- Paint/stain untreated wood.
- Remove garbage frequently and keep trash cans lined and covered.
- Don't swing or swat at stinging insects.
- Avoid wearing sweet-smelling perfumes.
- Seek immediate medical attention if stung, as reactions can be severe.
- Do not attempt to remove a nest on your own. If you have an infestation, contact your local pest professional.

For more information, visit www.pestworld.org.