

Buzz Off!

Carpenter Bees: How to Identify, Treat, and Prevent Them



About Carpenter Bees

In the spring carpenter bees start to bore perfect round holes in which the females will deposit their eggs. They bore into unprotected or unsealed wood and use the cavity as a "nest." The sawdust coming from the hole is called "frass." The bees produce a yellow- or brown-colored dropping that secretes out of the bored holes and stains the wood. When the larvae emerges, this creates a nice meal for birds such as woodpeckers, who then make the holes become larger. Carpenter bees are often mistaken for bumble bees. They can sting, but it is rare. The bees prefer unprotected wood, but they will start chewing through nearly any wood they can bore through.

What To Do If You Have Carpenter Bees

If you are brave enough, wait for nightfall, spray insecticide into the hole and plug the hole with a wooden dowel, then seal. This could be difficult because they often make their holes in high places, like the soffits or the eaves. A better (and safer!) solution would be to call a pest management company. The treatment is usually fairly inexpensive unless you have a very severe infestation. Some homeowners have also had success limiting the pests using carpenter bee traps, such as those found at carpenterbeesolutions.com. A heavy duty fly swatter can also do the trick!

How To Prevent An Infestation

Make sure your wood soffits, fascia, eaves, trims, and siding are either painted or sealed with varnish. It is worth spending extra money for paint that has been treated with insecticide. Re-paint if needed in early spring and check for holes. Bees tend to come back to their old nesting grounds.

Signs You Have Carpenter Bees

- Are you frequently disturbed by the tap-tap-tap of a woodpecker searching for carpenter bee larvae?
- Do you sometimes hear a scratching sound over your window?
- Do you see holes above your windows, on your siding, or sometimes on your mailbox post?
- Do you see yellowish dirty streaks near the holes?
- Do you see what looks like sawdust coming out of your downspouts?

