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Black Carpenter Ants

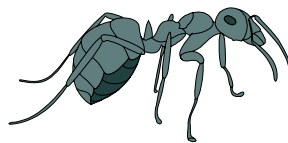
The black carpenter ant is a destructive wood-nesting insect common in our area. The workers of this species vary from 1/4 to more than 1/2 inch in length. Unlike termites, the winged reproductive forms do not lose their wings after swarming. These ants have no sting, but can inflict a painful bite injecting formic acid into the wound.

The carpenter ant feeds on live and dead insects, the honeydew of aphids and treehoppers, the juices of ripe fruit, the sap of certain plants, and refuse. When they invade the home, they are attracted to sweets, fruits, and cakes. Most of their foraging is done at night.

In an established, mature parental colony, males and females overwinter until they make their nuptial flight in spring and early summer. The fertilized females establish a nest in a cavity under the bark of a tree, stump, or log. She seals the cavity, lays the eggs, and brings the first brood to maturity by feeding them her salivary secretions. The first brood consists of 10-20 small workers who tend the next brood. Larger workers are produced as the colony develops. When the worker population of the colony attains 2,000-3,000 members, males and females are produced. A three to six year-old mature colony consists of the fertile female, 2,000-3,000 or more workers of various sizes, males, winged females, eggs, larvae, and pupae.

Moist wood provides the ideal environment for the black carpenter ant. Under natural conditions, they nest in logs, stumps, dead trees and the dead interiors of live trees, which they enter through wounds and decayed areas in the bark. Carpenter ants enter homes through seams, between sidings and sheathings, between flooring and sub-flooring. Especially subject to attack are porches, kitchens, bathrooms and laundry areas, where there is moisture from leakage or condensation.

Carpenter ants are an indicator organism. Their presence in the home indicates a moisture problem exists somewhere. The problem will eventually cause decay of the wood. Once you have identified the moisture problem, correct it and eliminate the carpenter ant nests.



Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Considerations

IPM is a common sense approach to pest control and plant care. It employs a number of measures to prevent, control or reduce problems. Always use the least toxic methods first. A good mechanical control, in many instances, is to vacuum the insects and then throw the bag away. Regarding household pests, in addition to regular house-cleaning, the best preventive method is to monitor the home, i.e. note any cracks in foundations, air spaces between windows and frames, poorly-fitting doors, moisture from leaks, etc., and correct such examples/situations.

Prevention

1. Keep stored firewood covered, off the ground and out of doors and as far from the home as possible.
2. Take necessary precautions to keep lumber dry and correct moist wood situations. Replace water-damaged wood with pretreated lumber.
3. Remove dead trees and stumps from the immediate vicinity of the house. Remove large tree limbs overhanging the roof of the home.
4. Separate wood from soil contact with concrete. Treat wood prone to a moisture problem with a preservative. Check for leaks in roofing and siding, around windows and chimneys. Check porches, steps, rain gutters and flashing. Check and provide adequate ventilation in laundry rooms and bathrooms, and in the kitchen where moisture may condense.
5. Extend drain pipes at least 5' from base of building.

Chemical Controls

Remember, chemicals are only temporary relief — if moisture problems continue, the ants return. The ultimate goal is to destroy the queen. Chemical pesticides are available. If you cannot locate or treat the colony yourself, you may want to enlist the services of a Certified Pesticide Operator. **Read the label and follow manufacturer's directions.**

"This publication contains pesticide recommendations. Changes in pesticide regulations occur constantly and human errors are still possible. Some materials mentioned may no longer be available, and some uses may no longer be legal. All pesticides distributed, sold or applied in New York State must be registered with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Questions concerning the legality and/or registration status for pesticide use in New York State should be directed to the appropriate Cornell Cooperative Extension specialist or your regional DEC office (631) 444-0340. Read the label before applying any pesticide. Cornell Cooperative Extension and its employees assume no liability for the effectiveness or results of any chemicals for pesticide usage. No endorsement of products is made or implied."

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