

HOME GROUNDS FACT SHEET



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Nassau County



Horticulture Center
Demonstration & Community Gardens
at East Meadow Farm
832 Merrick Avenue
East Meadow, NY 11554
Phone: 516-565-5265

Carpenter Bee

The Eastern carpenter bee, *Xylocopa virginica*, is a large robust bee about an inch long. It is similar in appearance to the bumble bee, but the top of its abdomen is bare and has a shiny, blackish appearance. Male carpenter bees do not sting, but may fly close to the heads of humans who approach their nesting area. The female can sting, but seldom does unless provoked or molested.

Carpenter bees tunnel by means of their mandibles into the solid wood of telephone poles, structural timbers, rafters or beams. Small supporting posts and even frames of rose arbors are attacked. They excavate a tunnel one foot or more in length that divides into several cells. The female partitions the cells with chipped wood cemented together. She then visits flowers and provides each cell with pollen.

Ordinarily, damage done by these insects is of little or no importance, but structural repairs may be necessary if colonies are formed year after year in the same timbers.

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.

Management

Frequent applications of paint usually gives protection. However, if the insects start to make tunnels in exposed wood, other measures are necessary. Chemical pesticides are available. If you choose to use chemical pesticides, contact your local Cooperative Extension office for specific recommendations. Apply the insecticide to the wood surfaces where the bees are active.

Well painted, finished structures are a deterrent to carpenter bees. When tunnels are found, treatment with an insecticide and sealing of the tunnel is recommended. Wasp, hornet and bee aerosols are effective and easy to use. They should be applied after dark on a cool evening when the bees are less active in the tunnel entrances and along exposed surfaces. After application, the holes should be plugged deeply with putty or caulking compound. If tunnels are plugged without first killing the insects, carpenter bees trapped inside will bore new openings.



WHENEVER YOU USE A PESTICIDE,
ALWAYS READ THE LABEL AND FOLLOW
THE MANUFACTURER'S INSTRUCTIONS
AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

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