

Paper Wasps and Yellow Jackets

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Wasps are beneficial insect predators and biocontrol agents of many insect and arthropod pests, but during the summer months, some species have the potential to be an urban pest.

Identification of Social Wasps

Social wasps such as paper wasps and yellow jackets, live in large colonies, compared to solitary wasps, which live and forage alone. Bees can be distinguished from wasps by their fuzzy appearance and their diet consists of nectar, pollen and water. Wasps appear hard and shiny with less hair, wings are folded into a narrow strip over the abdomen while at rest and legs dangle as they fly.

Pest Status of Wasps

Wasps become nuisances when nests are constructed in locations where humans frequent. Only females are capable of stinging and most stings occur when they are stepped on, touched or in defense mode. Some people are hypersensitive to wasp venom, and stings can lead to life-threatening anaphylactic shock. It is



Paper wasps appear smooth and shiny with various patterns of yellow and brown or black



Yellow jackets are bright yellow and black with black antennae



The European paper wasp resembles the yellow jacket, but has yellow antennae



Paper wasp nest



Yellow jacket nest

advised to seek medical treatment if severe reaction occurs.

Nesting Type and Location

The queen overwinters in protective sites, and emerges when the weather warms up. She begins to search for a suitable location to begin construction of her nest. She builds cells using papery pulp made from chewed up wood fibers mixed

with saliva, and lays a single egg in each cell. She forages for food during the day, feeding larvae pre-chewed insects. Adult wasps feed on sugary substances such as nectar, plant sap and rotting fruits.

The nest of a paper wasp is a single-layer of downward-facing, exposed cells, resembling an umbrella. These nests are constructed under any horizontal surface, including overhangs of

buildings, beams, furniture and limbs. The European paper wasp can also nest in small cavities, such as hollow posts of outdoor furniture, appliances and light fixtures. A yellow jacket nest consists of a series of round combs stacked in tiers, covered in an envelope and are located underground in abandoned rodent burrows, as aerial nests or in wall voids.

Avoid Attracting Wasps

Many wasps are scavengers and will forage on a wide variety of foods we consume. The best way to prevent wasps is to keep food covered, dispose of trash in a covered container and remove rotting fruit from trees.

Finding and Treating the Nest

The best time to find the

nest is during the day, but the best time to treat is after dark when temperatures are cooler and all foragers retreat to the nest. Wear protective clothing that covers the body, face and hands completely, and if using a flashlight, cover beam with red cellophane. If you find a nest in your wall void, do not seal the entry hole!

Pest management companies can eliminate wasp nests if located in difficult areas and locations. They have specialized equipment and insecticidal dust to complete the job during the day. There are many products labeled for wasps and intended for homeowner use. Synthetic pyrethroids such as cyfluthrin, prallethrin and deltamethrin offer quick knockdown in ready-to-use formulations that can be sprayed as far away as 15–20 feet. It is best to treat now while colonies are below peak population numbers and aggressive behavior is not yet evident. Come late summer, adult wasps will be plentiful and respond aggressively when competing for sources of sugar (i.e. your watermelon, popsicle, fruit juices and pop).

If you can avoid the nest and it's not bothering anyone, leave the nest alone. The colony will die after the first hard freeze.

Severe Weather Preparedness and COVID-19

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The current situation with COVID-19 and social distancing rules do not eliminate the potential for a severe weather outbreak, including the possibility of tornadoes. However, it does require a little extra preparation for such an event as we are in the midst of severe storm season. Planning can reduce the danger should a tornado warning be issued.

The first step is to have an emergency plan for your household. The plan will include identifying the safest location for shelter in your home, preparing an emergency kit and checking your method of receiving alerts and warnings.

Best Places to Shelter

If you live in a mobile home, there is no safe place to take shelter in that structure. Check with your park management on shelter capabilities and make plans accordingly. Verify these are open and available to you and the other residents despite the recent COVID-19 protocols.

If you live in an apartment complex, you may have bigger challenges. Check to see if your building or complex has a safe place to shelter during severe weather. If so, verify the shelter is open and available to you and the other residents despite recent COVID-19 protocols. If no shelter is available, check for space on the lowest level, without windows, and put as many walls between you and the outside as possible.

In a house without a basement,

put yourself on the lowest level with as many walls between you and the outside as possible. Centrally-located halls and bathrooms are the safest location to seek shelter (see graphic below). If you have a basement, that is, by far, the best location to go. Sheltering under the stairwell may protect you from falling debris.

Emergency Kit Supplies

An emergency kit should consist of water (one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation), at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food, flashlight, first aid kit, extra batteries, whistle to signal for help, dust mask to help filter contaminated air, plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place, moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation, wrench or pliers to turn off utilities, manual can opener for food and cell phone with chargers and a backup battery.

Best Options for Severe Weather Updates

Smart phones and the internet are a common method of getting weather updates. You should also consider a backup method in case these systems are down. An NOAA weather radio is an important tool to receive these warnings. When purchasing a weather radio, make certain it has a signal in the location you will use for shelter and is programmed for your area.

Now's the Time to Plan and Practice Your Plan

Many people are spending more time than normal at their residences. While

this will provide additional challenges for individuals in apartment complexes, etc. – it does provide a fantastic opportunity for everyone to plan and rehearse. Disaster plans shouldn't be limited to severe weather! Prepare and practice for fires, earthquakes and other disasters in this time of isolation.

During a disaster, what is good for you is also good for your pets, so get them ready today. Make sure your pets and any larger animals are included in your emergency preparedness plans. For more information, visit <https://www.ready.gov/pets>.

Remember:

- In the case of a warning, your first priority is to protect yourself from a potential tornado!
- Have multiple modes of receiving an alert or warning – with at least one form of alert not reliant upon cellular communications. Set correctly for

your area, an NOAA weather radio can provide important information without relying on cellular access.

- Identify the safest shelter location — either in your home or in a communal shelter.
- If using a communal shelter — i.e. mobile home park or apartment complex — confirm the shelter is open and what distancing practices are in place keeping in mind COVID-19 protocols.

This article was adapted from K-State Research and Extension, https://webapp.agron.ksu.edu/agr_social/article_new/severe-weather-preparedness-during-covid-19-381-8

FOR MORE SEVERE WEATHER SAFETY TIPS VISIT:

https://www.weather.gov/mob/Severe_Tornado
<https://disaster.unl.edu>



Ideal tornado sheltering locations within a house. Graphic from NOAA (<https://www.weather.gov/safety/tornado>)