

Prevention of Wasp Attack and Infestation

Biology and characteristics of wasp

Wasps are insects related to bees. A wasp can be easily identified by the yellow and black markings on its body, a very narrow waist, two pairs of membranous wing and a sting at the end of the abdomen.

Wasps may live solitarily in ground holes, clay pots or bamboo stem cavities. However, the nuisance species are social. Their papery nests often hang on trees or are attached to the outside of buildings. Commonly found species are *Vespa bicolor* (Common Wasps), *Vespa affinis* (Common Brown Wasps) and *Polistes olivaceous* (Common Paper Wasps).

The nest of *Vespa* species is a round or oval structure with the diameter of about 30 cm or more, housing up to 20 000 workers. The nest of *Polistes* species is open without an envelope and only consists of one layer of cells, the number of wasps inside is therefore relatively small.

A small nest has its entrance situated at the bottom, while a large one may have a slightly offset entrance and may have more than one entrance. Wasps will not swarm out of a nest unless the nest is disturbed or destroyed.

Wasps mainly feed on other insects such as caterpillars, but also on nectar and rotten/over-ripened fruit. A large concentration of wasps is usually caused by the attraction of food.

Wasp queens usually select sites to build nests in spring and then breed. As most wasps will die in winter, wasp colonies and their nests are rarely more than one year old. If the weather is warm, food for wasps will be abundant, which may stimulate a surge in wasp population. This may result in a shortage of nesting sites and cause invasions of wasps into houses.

Sting

Wasps protect themselves by stinging enemies with their reusable stings. Most people after stung will experience swell, pain and itch at the affected areas, but the severity varies for different people.

Avoid wasp attack

- Do not disturb wasps and in particular wasp nests to avoid provoking them;
- Do not leave food or drink uncovered, especially ripe fruit and soft drinks, as the scent of food, especially the sugary ones, will attract wasps;
- Keep refuse in tightly sealed containers;
- Avoid walking barefoot on any vegetation;

- Avoid intruding the territories of wasps;
- Avoid using odour-producing cosmetics, and avoid wearing brightly coloured or patterned clothing as they may attract wasps;
- When approached by wasps, remain calm and move slowly away from them;
- If likely to be attacked by wasps, avoid being stung on the head, mouth and throat: for instance, pull a portion of clothes over the head (but not affecting the eyesight), and then move away slowly;
- Seek medical treatment in case of severe allergic reactions after being stung.

Prevention of wasp infestation

- Thin the trees and turn the top layer of soil in the flowerbeds regularly to discourage wasps from building nests on trees or in the soil;
- Avoid planting vegetation with juicy fruit, which may attract wasps from entering the premises;
- Do not leave sugary food or drink uncovered in open area to avoid attracting wasps;
- Inspect the gardens and open areas of the premises regularly so that any wasp nest can be detected early. It is easier to destroy a nest at its early stage when it only contains a few wasps.

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