

CARPENTER BEES

If you happen to notice a large bee buzzing around you head or dive bombing another bee or insect. Don't be to alarmed it is only a carpenter bee. They arrive in the spring or early summer (April or May) and hover around buildings, in search of mates and building sites for their nests.

Male carpenter bees are quite aggressive, often hovering in front of people who are around the nests.

Keep in mind: The males are quite harmless, however, since they lack stingers. Female carpenter bees can inflict a painful sting but seldom do unless you disturb their nest building.



Carpenter bees resemble bumble bees, but the upper surface of their abdomen is bare and shiny black; bumble bees have a hairy abdomen with at least some yellow markings.

The nesting habits of the two types of bees are quite different. Bumble bees usually nest in the ground whereas carpenter bees tunnel into wood to lay their eggs. Bare, unpainted or weathered softwoods are preferred, especially redwood, cedar, cypress and pine. Painted or pressure-treated wood is much less susceptible to attack.

The adult carpenter bees overwinter in wood within abandoned nest tunnels. After mating in late spring or early summer, the fertilized females excavate tunnels in wood and lay their eggs within a series of small cells. The cells are provisioned with a ball of pollen on which the larvae feed, emerging as adults in late summer. The entrance hole and tunnels are perfectly round and about the diameter of your finger. Coarse sawdust the color of fresh cut wood will often be present beneath the entry hole, and burrowing sounds may be heard from within the wood. The life cycle (egg, larva, pupa, adult) is completed in approximately seven weeks. There is only one generation per year. This new generation adult usually hangs out in the gallery until August when she gathers pollen to store in the galleries for hibernation.

Please remember although they are a nuisance in drilling holes, dive bombing and buzzing around your head, Carpenter Bees are also very beneficial pollinators of many flowers and trees.